



Window on Jordan

The spirit of Jordanian football is created by the fans

By Ibtisam Awadat
Special to The Star

WHENEVER AL WEHDAT loses a match against its usual rival, Al Faisaly, I become ill and sleep at home for four days," says Mahmoud Mohammad one of the Al Wehdah Sports Team supporters. "I can't miss any match for Al Wehdah. I just drop everything and go to the stadium," he adds.

This 19-year-old fan is not a special case, many people like him love to watch their team, support it and enjoy watching them play. But this addiction can sometimes be taken a little bit too far as was the case recently when a

groom left his wedding party and went to Syria in support of his team; unfortunately his team lost and the wedding cancelled because the bride's father refused to leave his daughter with a soccer addict.

Back to Jordan, the football fever engulfs all supporters especially when the most popular teams play: Al Wehdah, Al Faisaly, and Al Ramtha.

"Our supporters are very understanding, but when they get angry nothing can stop them," Youssef Al Amruti, Al Wehdah's captain, and the great defender as he is called, tells The Star.

"We like our supporters and we are very grateful to them, but sport is like a coin with two faces,

it's either win or lose and we have to accept this," Al Amruti adds.

"As athletes we refuse all the stupidities which take place; some people just don't know how to express their support," says Samer Bahlouz, a player for Al Wehdah.

"I remember when we lost a match in 1993, some of our supporters threw stones at our bus, it was really a terrifying experience," Bahlouz adds.

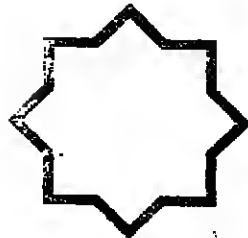
In its matches in Tunis, Al Wehdah lost all games, one of them was against Algeria which ended in a 7-0 score.

"When we came back to Jordan, we expected

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The Star



Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly



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أسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

US seeks backing in latest face-off with Iraq

By Peter Baker

WASHINGTON—The Clinton administration once again marshaled its international allies to present a unified front against Iraq Tuesday as the Baghdad regime carried out its threat to block a US-led weapons inspection team and reignited a crisis that has bedeviled Washington for months.

The renewed confrontation put the United States back in a hauntingly familiar position, laboring to hold together a coalition capable of persuading Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to back down. While holding out the threat of military force, the administration chose a cautious path Tuesday, relying on what it called "steady-as-she-goes diplomacy" to orchestrate a condemnation from the UN Security Council.

Iraq thwarted a scheduled search Tuesday by a UN weapons inspection team led by an American, one of several UN teams in the country, by refusing to provide escorts to facilitate entry into government-controlled sites. The standoff marked the first time an inspection has been prevented since November, when Saddam reversed an order that had resulted in the withdrawal of all weapons inspectors.

"They're up to their old tricks and we shouldn't allow them to pursue this," Bill Richardson, the US ambassador to the United Nations, said in ABC's "Good Morning America." "Patience is running out in a lot of Security Council capitals. The Iraqis are really pushing this to the brink."

A US-drafted statement that could be voted on by the council as early as Wednesday "condemns in the strong-

est terms" the latest Iraqi defiance and calls it "unacceptable and a clear violation of the relevant resolutions" requiring unconditional access to all sites sought by UN inspectors. Although the statement does not warn of any consequences, US officials said the goal was to show that there are no serious fissures in the international coalition enforcing sanctions against Iraq and to give UN inspectors chief Richard Butler fresh proof of that resolve when he travels to Baghdad this weekend on a previously scheduled visit. The latest developments underscored a seemingly endless cycle of provocation-and-response that has ensnared President Clinton and US allies, according to White House aides—as well as the dearth of attractive options to solve the impasse.

US officials said they never considered last fall's crisis to be truly over, even after a Russian-brokered deal reducing tension in the region. Since then, two US aircraft carrier groups and other military forces have remained in the Gulf area as a warning to Iraq. Another incident like Tuesday's was inevitable as Iraq apparently probes for cracks in the US-led coalition, Clinton aides said. "The crisis may have disappeared in your minds," White House press secretary Mike McCurry told reporters Tuesday. "It has not changed one whit since October." France, which had been reluctant to endorse a hard line against Iraq, Tuesday sided with Washington, issuing a statement calling on Iraqi officials "to immediately reconsider their decision." A Russian official told reporters in Moscow that "Russia is taking active steps to find a way out of the situation." Iraq

provoked the latest showdown when it refused to provide escorts for a UN team led by American Scott Ritter that was prepared to search sites outside Baghdad for evidence of restricted missile, nuclear, biological or chemical weapons technology. When no officials appeared at the appointed time, Ritter waited 30 minutes and then abandoned the day's mission. UN officials said they are unwilling to send out a team without their Iraqi counterparts for security reasons.

Iraqi officials have complained that the team contained too many Americans and Britons and accused Ritter, a former US Marine captain, of being a spy. US officials and Ritter have denied that and UN officials said Tuesday's 31-member team included specialists from 12 nations.

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An abominable snowman stands in Jabal Lweibdeh's public park Monday, one day after the country was hit by a blizzard. (See page 2 for details)

Photo by Mahmoud Shawhid

Investigations continue in failed assassination attempt in Amman

By a Star Staff Writer

INFORMED SOURCES unveiled new information about the failed assassination attempt against the Mr Raheem Taher, the commercial attaché at the Iraqi embassy in Amman. The

police arrested five Iraqi citizens including one woman in the past 10 days, week, who were allegedly involved in an attempt to assassinate Mr Taher. The Amman's Public Prosecutor has started investigations on the case.

On 3 November, Mr Taher, 55, escaped unhurt when attackers fired on him from a tourist car. A professional gunman fired a shot using a silencer pistol as Mr Taher was making his way to his office in the morning; the bullet hit the column of the car's left door, the attacker was targeting the head of the diplomat.

The sources added that the mother-in-law of the diplomat is also allegedly involved in the case. Investigations unveiled that the woman, who is living in Iraq instigated the so-called Mr Taher, Sameer, 21, to participate in the planning of the attack. Investigations revealed that the mother-in-law made a deal with Qassem Al Rajhi, 30 to kill Mr Raheem for a fixed sum of money.

The source added that Al Rajhi who is the main suspect in the case is a veteran



Mr Taher

Iraqi officer who came to Jordan with his brother last November to carry out the mission, but failed. Both returned to Iraq.

Ten days before the attempt on the 3 November Al Rajhi again came to Jor-

Jerusalem office of the American Jewish Committee. "Mystical people are saying Israel is under a curse. Others say a national depression is causing our senior security people to not be concentrating on what they're doing. And others think it's all a coincidence."

The case of Yehuda Gil, the former Mossad official who fed the government false information about Syria for up to 20 years, has hit home with special force in a nation whose intelligence services—especially the Mossad, its foreign operations branch—are viewed with something akin to reverence. Alpher and other analysts of Israeli military and security affairs say the country's shock over the case has focused attention on factors that may have contributed to the recent setbacks, ranging from changes occurring in Israeli society to specific failings within the Mossad. To begin with, several analysts said, in an era of peacemaking between Israel and its neighbors, fewer of the nation's brightest young people are drawn to careers in the intelligence and military services, reducing the pool of available talent. For those who do sign up, their jobs may seem less crucial—and glamorous—than in years past. Reserve soldiers also often try to skip out of their annual duty, a shirking of national responsibility that once would have been unthinkable in Israel.

"These are all transformations in Israeli society, and some of them are inevitable because of the peace process and greater prosperity here," said Alpher, a former senior official with the Mossad. "But they may be influencing factors" in the recent problems affecting the military and intelligence services. Troubles inside the Mossad itself—from recruitment failures to lax supervision of agents and operators—also have played a role in the Gil affair and the agency's bungled attempt in Jordan in September to assassinate Khaled Meshaal, a leader of the Islamic group Hamas.

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Israeli conditions toughen US task on peace process

By Rebecca Tronson

JERUSALEM—A week before President Clinton is to meet Israeli and Palestinian leaders in a high-risk bid to revive the flailing Middle East peace process, the Israeli Cabinet this week imposed a nine-page list of conditions that it said the Palestinians must meet before Israel will hand over any more West Bank land.

US officials said the Israeli action would make Clinton's task more difficult. The administration has said the pullback is essential to its efforts to restart the deadlocked peace talks. "If you focus on the negative and what the other side isn't doing, there's no end to

it," a US diplomat said. "There's no way to create a partnership under those circumstances."

Palestinian officials also rejected the Israeli conditions, which add specifics to pledges made by the Palestinian Authority in a 1997 US-brokered agreement that led to Israel withdrawing its troops from the West Bank city of Hebron. Ahmed Tibi, an adviser to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, accused Israel of stalling the peace process, unwilling to give up more land to the Palestinians.

"This is an excuse," Tibi said. "The Israeli government is trying again to

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INSIDE



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wonders of Katayef

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By Michael Peel

FENNER BROCKWAY, socialist and pacifist, once described Speakers' Corner, the triangle of asphalt in London's Hyde Park, as an "inbuilt cathedral of freedom, the Mecca of free speech, of eloquence for the expression of all views."

Speakers' Corner today offers a less fulfilling spiritual experience. It is dominated by preachers who harangue the crowds and insult each other. Most of the present generation of Hyde Park speakers shun reasoned argument in favour of hellfire rhetoric. They make no attempt to engage their mainly tourist audiences in debate; the Nation of Islam's representative even surrounds himself with unsmiling bodyguards who seem to look straight through the crowd.

It must be a perplexing and disappointing sight for visiting Chinese and Russians who were inspired at a distance by stories of Speaker's Corner as the symbol of free expression by ordinary people. They would find it hard to

believe that the British government was once so concerned about the political activity in Hyde Park that it closed Speakers' Corner during the 1926 general strike.

Speakers' Corner had provided a line of communication between ordinary people with a point to make and their peers. It spawned imitations in countries where Hyde Park's history as a forum for dissent was admired.

In 1855, a 150,000-strong protest against Lord Grosvenor's Sunday trading bill ended in a riot, causing Karl Marx to note that the English revolution had begun in Hyde Park.

Eleven years later, rallies were torn down along nearby Park Lane following an unauthorized meeting of the Reform League, which was campaign-

ing for a site in London to be set aside for demonstrations and public speaking. The league continued to hold mass meetings by Marble Arch until Speakers' Corner was established there in 1872.

The corner attracted the attention of the powerful, and of those who wanted to seize power. Vladimir Lenin and his wife improved their English by listening to the orators. A few years after the Russian revolution, Stanley Baldwin, the UK prime minister, and Austen Chamberlain, the foreign secretary, were spotted at Marble Arch in the crowd surrounding Frank Ridley, the socialist historian.

The corner enjoyed its heyday in the years immediately before and after the second world war. Then, according to Ridley, "literally millions of people from all over the world first acquired basic ideas about politics, economics and religion from visits to Marble Arch."



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Although it brought the country to a halt, latest snow fall proves to be a blessing in disguise



AMMAN (Star)—The snow blizzard that swept across most regions in Jordan during Sunday and Monday paralysed activity in Amman and the other governorates and blocked many roads leading to the capital. Most people were unable to reach their work and some were stranded on highways. In buses and cars, Government departments were open but many employees were unable to reach their work. Also exams of colleges and community faculties were postponed.

The heavy rain started Sunday with temperatures dropping

to below zero degree Celsius at night. During the day, temperatures rose to a maximum of six degrees, but the weather was cloudy and foggy.

The snowstorm which was the first to hit the Kingdom this winter, subsided on Monday afternoon. But the Department of Meteorology forecast more rain showers and warned of frost formation Tuesday and Wednesday.

Civil Defence Dept., officers dealt with about 111 accidents, including rescue operations for people besieged by the snow but no

major casualties occurred. However 56 car accidents were reported because of slippery icy roads.

CDD officials were prompt in dealing with such emergency cases and used bulldozers to remove the snow on the roads. They reported that roads in different regions were either completely or partially blocked by snow and did their utmost to make the traffic move easily and safely.

Civil Aviation Authority officials reported that some planes were unable to land in Amman airport and thus were diverted to the southern Red

Sea Resort of Aqaba. But officials of the Royal Jordanian said that Queen Alia airport was not closed and most flights took off on schedule. But there were some delays because some passengers were unable to arrive at the airport in time.

The average rainfall reached about 50 per cent in all regions, though in Tafleeh, Madaba and Ramtha it was lower. The Meteorology Dept., expected the weather, which began to stabilize, Monday, to remain under the effect of the



depression till Friday. Weather men forecast that it will remain partially cloudy with a chance of frost in hilly areas.

For children, snow is fun. Despite the freezing weather, they went out playing and throwing snow balls at each other and many people were just watching the scene of the white blanket which covered most parts of the Kingdom.

For farmers, the snow and the heavy rains promise a good harvest. The water reserves increased tremendously after a tough winter this year. The dams' reserve, reached about 110 million cubic meters, according to Dr. Zafer Al Alem, deputy general secretary in the Jordan Valley Authority. He adds that the latest snow and rain falls will have a positive effect on surface and underground water.



French Foreign Minister visits Kingdom, discusses peace process

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein received French Foreign Minister Mr. Hubert Vedrine at the Royal Court, Monday. Discussions centered on means to upstart the stalled peace process. His visit was part of a regional tour and a French effort to move the peace process forward. The Foreign Minister also met HRH Crown Prince Hassan. During his trip he met with Planning Foreign Minister Dr. Rima Khalaf and signed an FF 80 million as a soft loan to Jordan. About FF 40 million of this will go to financing a water treatment project in north Jordan, and the rest to finance other projects in the Kingdom.



US Seeks Backing in latest face-off with Iraq

Continued from page 1

Although Rutter's team was thwarted, other inspectors were able to conduct their work in Baghdad Tuesday. Unlike last fall, UN officials allowed the other missions to proceed. When Iraq expelled American inspectors last October, the United Nations shut down other operations as well, arguing that Saddam could not determine the composition of inspection teams.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Investigations continue in failed assassination attempt in Amman

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dan, alone, using a fake passport under the name of Adnan Ja'far.

In Amman, Al Rajhi met with an Iraqi peddler, he made a deal with him to participate in the attack for an undisclosed amount of money. The peddler's role was to drive a rented car in the attack.

Both watched the home of Mr. Taher in Um Othaina, west Amman. Sameer, the son of the diplomat, acted as a liaison, informing both suspects about his father's steps by the phone.

On the day of the attempted assassination both suspects

knew that Mr. Taher will leave the house at around 7 am to drop his youngest son to school. Al Rajhi was sitting beside the driver when the diplomat switched his car.

Ignition, the assailant's car moved closer then Al Rajhi fired a bullet from his 9 mm pistol targeting the head of Mr. Taher, the bullet missed and hit the column of the left door.

Another Iraqi citizen is allegedly involved in the plan for the attack, he is working in Amman as a mechanic.

Minister of State for Information Affairs, Dr. Samir Mutaweh said that the arrested five Iraqi citizens

confessed to the attack, after the authorities seized the tool of the crime, a 9mm pistol.

The Minister said after the regular meeting of the Cabinet, Tuesday, that investigations disclosed that no political reasons were behind the attack, but it was related to strong family and financial motives. Investigations show that the attacker shot at the diplomat from his private 9 mm pistol, which was later seized by the police.

Mr. Mutaweh said that most of the arrested suspects entered the country with fake documents and some of them were living in the country for a long time.

Informed sources said that Amman's Public Prosecutor Mr. Mohammad Al Harashah is preparing the list of charges against the suspects based on their confession during investigations. Mr. Harashah is expected to charge Al Rajhi and the driver with the attempt of premeditated murder, the mechanic with assistance, and the mother-in-law, the Prosecutor charged with provocations. Al Rajhi's brother will be charged with hiding the plans to kill.

The Public Prosecutor is now investigating the son of Al Taher. Sources expect more surprises in the coming

The fingertip sensor, the high-tech version of 'Open Sesame'

SIEMENS RESEARCHERS in Munich-Perich have now succeeded in developing a "fingertip sensor" which recognizes and evaluates the characteristic patterns of a fingerprint in a very short space of time. The registration of a fingerprint only takes about half a second. The sensor is based on CMOS technology as used for the manufacture of integrated circuits offers a simple and convenient mode of identification with which for example chip cards, computers, cars and mobile telephones can be fitted.

In addition, by using the fingertip sensor one can be sure that identification only takes place in a context of one's own choosing, and that one's data are not passed on to some anonymous main-frame system elsewhere.

The sensor is based on CMOS technology as used for

the manufacture of integrated circuits. Since it is extremely small and flat, it can be easily integrated in a chip card. This means that simply holding the card in one's hand guarantees its proper use.

The sensor's surface resolution comes to 50 um or 500 dpi, so that it complies with all currently prevailing standards for fingerprint recognition systems. It can recognize about 50 shades of gray. An A/D converter makes the image data available in digital form at the sensor output.

The new fingertip sensor from Siemens offers a simple and convenient mode of identification that can be controlled by the use in the future, computers, cars, mobile telephones and front doors etc. may very well be fitted with fingertip sensors.

The reliable identification of a person is a difficult prob-

lem. It is essential to ensure that only authorized users have access, for example, to cash dispensers, sensitive areas of a company, or to participation in electronic commerce on the Internet. Best suited to this purpose are biometrical techniques which register immutable physical attributes, e.g. a person's manner of speaking, the arrangement of facial features, the way in which he signs his name, the reflection of the retina, and many others. Fingerprints in particular have long been considered an unmistakable and falsifiable identifying feature. On a fingerprint area of 100mm² an average of 12 characteristic patterns are found, on the basis of which a person can be identified beyond doubt.

Nevertheless, the recording and evaluation of fingerprints has been a laborious process requiring expensive equip-

ment. Now Siemens researchers in Munich-Perich have succeeded in developing a "fingertip sensor" which recognizes and evaluates the characteristic patterns of a fingerprint in a very short space of time. The registration of a fingerprint takes only half a second. An evaluation algorithm identifies the specific patterns from the image of the fingerprint and compares the information thus obtained directly with the features stored, for example, in the computer or hard system of a car. Only if the fingerprint matches will the computer allow the car to start by releasing the locking system.

The great advantage for the user is the extreme ease of application since no more ID numbers or passwords have to be memorized in order to identify oneself as the legitimate.

Soul-searching Israelis wonder about Mossad

Continued from page 1

The two setbacks have helped tarnish the image of an agency that has long enjoyed the overwhelming support of Israel's public and politicians.

That may not be all bad. Yossi Melman, an Israeli expert in military and intelligence issues, said it is high time that Israelis adopt a more skeptical, realistic attitude toward their intelligence services. The occasional failures should be publicized along with the successes, he argued.

But the Gil affair is likely to cause at least temporary credibility problems for the Mossad in its dealings with foreign intelligence agencies. Melman said, strengthening what he described as existing assumptions that its analyses are sometimes skewed to serve Israel's political aims.

That doesn't mean that agencies like the CIA won't continue to meet with the Mossad, but they will probably be more suspicious of its information," said Melman, the author of several books about Israel's intelligence services.

The recent troubles may also have done damage to any deterrent capability that the Mossad's image and reputation has on foreign groups or

governments seeking to harm Israel.

"If the mystique is damaged, it's likely to create more daring aspirations on the other side," Melman said.

Of perhaps equal concern, in the aftermath of the Meshaal attack, a furious King Hussein forced Israel to reveal previously secret details of its covert operations, including the weapon its agents used to spray a deadly chemical into Meshaal's ear, and the toxin's antidote.

Meshaal has recovered from the attack, which also led to Israel's release of dozens of Arab prisoners, including its most prized political prisoner, Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.

Analysts say the recent failures point to a need for stricter standards, more supervision and other changes in the Mossad, but they say it is far from certain that these will occur. Israeli leaders, have proven reluctant to "push through such reforms in the past, and the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is considered unlikely to be an exception.

For the moment, the government is awaiting the conclusions of two panels investigating the incidents. A parliamentary committee on Israel's secret services is scrutinizing the Gil affair and is expected to release its findings within two weeks, according to lawmaker Yossi Sarid, who serves on the committee.

A three-member commission, appointed by the government, also is close to completing its investigation into the attempt to assassinate Meshaal.

Top Mossad officials, including agency head Danny Yatom, have been warned that they could be hurt by its conclusions.

The ramifications of the Gil case are significant. "We have had corruption problems and operational failures in the Mossad before," said Ron Ben-Yishai, a military and intelligence analyst for the daily Yediot Aharonot.

"But here, for the first time, we have a case that touches the foundations of the Mossad—its information-gathering role—and shows fraud there." For many years, Gil was the top Mossad official responsible for monitoring Syria. Even after his retirement in 1989, he stayed on as a consultant to the agency because he was considered to have an excellent source in the Syrian military. For years, according to media accounts and various official assess-

ments, he faked reports suggesting that President Hafez Assad was not committed to peace negotiations with Israel.

Gil, who is on trial behind closed doors in Tel Aviv, is charged with fraud, embezzlement and passing information with the intention of undermining state security.

He has pleaded innocent to the charges, despite reports that he confessed to many of the specifics shortly after his arrest in November.

Gil's attorney, Yigal Shapira, disputes that any fabrication occurred during Gil's earlier stint with the Mossad, saying that his client only wanted to prove himself when he was called back to the agency after his retirement.

Shapira said Gil "recycled" old reports when pressed for new information from his Syrian source and never intended to harm the state.

Israeli officials have said the false information contributed to tensions between the two states in August 1996 when the Syrians moved troops to the Israeli border, lending credence to the idea that Syria was planning an offensive on the Israeli-held Golan Heights.

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JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

Why don't you go home to the family since you are not joining the fun!



Normalization forever!

The Social Security Corp. (SSC) has decided to throw in the towel and submit to normalization. Its Executive Council has decided to buy shares in a Jordanian company that already Israeli share participation of half a million dinars. The SSC's investment is JD 1.5 million. The company which is registered in the Ministry of Trade and Industry and is to have its headquarters in Amman, has a capital of JD 3.5 million. The corporation's participation is creating quite a stir. General Secretary of the Al Mustaqbal Party, Sulaiman Arar denounced the latest decision. While former IAF deputy spokesman Jamil Abu Baker are equally scathing. And talking about the possibility of more joint ventures, the latest comes from the Israeli side. It has already put forward the suggestion of building a joint fun fair in Al Baqura.

Consumer awareness

A very interesting study carried out recently by the Consumer Protection Society proves that Jordanians are a poor lot when it comes to product awareness. The study found that 84 percent of those polled don't read the production and expiry dates of the products they buy. But statistics reveal more. Around 65.3 percent don't read the contents item of the product that is bought while 52.2 percent don't read the company name. Also 55 percent don't read the specifications of the products or whether it contains such things as preservatives or colorings; and naturally 58 percent don't read the weights of the product.

Telephone changes

This time it's in the Abdali area. The Third Abdali telephone exchange will be operational by the end of the month and will cover Al Abdali, Interior Circle, Jabal Al Hussein up to the Firas Circle, Shmeisani, a part of Al Nuzha and the area between the University Road and Wasfi Al Tal Street. This means that there will be a transfer of all the telephone numbers that begin with 66 and 67 from the old Abdali exchange to the new one. In addition, all the telephone numbers that start with 60, 69, 68 will be changed. Also 5 will be added to the phone numbers that start with 60, 66, 67, 68, 69 making them 71 seven digits. Also three digits—562—will be added on to the numbers that start with 70.

Illiteracy

We in Jordan have probably one of the highest literacy rate in the world. Statistics show that the illiteracy rate in the country is as low as 12 percent. Officials expect this to decrease as low as eight percent by the year 2000.

The budget

The 1998 budget is currently being discussed in the Lower House. In last Sunday's session only seven deputies spoke. The sessions for Monday and Thursday were cancelled because of the bad weather. It was resumed again, but no doubt it will continue this week. The budget has already been discussed by the Finance Committee of the Lower House which it recommended to the government that it must take into account the issue of transparency with regards to privatization, the high cost of living and providing solutions to the issue of poverty.

Fire in Zerqa

A fuel depot was burnt down in Zerqa as a result of a huge fire that erupted in the early hours of Tuesday morning, leading to its destruction. The fire spread and damaged some of the adjacent shops that sold spareparts. Firefighters from Amman and Zerqa as well as members of the Armed Forces took part in the three-hour effort to put out the fire. Extensive damage was incurred to the depot and shops that were located in a densely-populated area of the city.

Education in the frying pan

Minister of Education, Dr. Munir Al Masri said that his ministry was able to identify more than 100 forged educational certificates in 1997. He said that most of these belonged to Jordanian students abroad; only one or two of these certificates originated locally. The minister added that all these certificates are now in the hands of the security authorities.

Night club removed

The Greater Amman Municipality has revoked a license for a night club near the King Abdullah Gardens. According to Amman Mayor Dr. Mamdouh Al Abbadi, the reason for such action was to do with the fact that the club was too near Al Faiba mosque.

Managing Director of Petra Engineering Industries, Mr. Osama Hussein, is heading a delegation to the United States of America to participate in the annual HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) exhibition in the USA. Over 1000 major companies will be exhibiting their products on 30,000 square meters in San Francisco between 19-21 January 1998 for 18,000 international and American visitors.

Petra Engineering Industries, a leading company in the manufacture of quality air conditioning and refrigeration equipment in the Middle East, is one of a few Arab companies that are participating in this significant event. This is not the first time for Petra to exhibit its products in such international shows. The last exhibition was in October 1997, where Petra displayed its new products at the Ikk Essen '97 event in Germany. The Ikk is also one of the most important annual events in Europe, focusing on HVAC equipment, in which Petra was the only Arab exhibiting company.

Arafat's visit to Jordan seen as way to advance peace

AMMAN (Star)—His Majesty King Hussein received Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday. Both leaders reviewed efforts aimed to salvage the region's deadlocked peace process from the impasse that the rightwing Israeli government policies led to, and particularly those of the latest visit of American envoy Dennis Ross.

King Hussein phoned President Arafat in Ramallah last Friday and it was then that the Palestinian president decided to visit Jordan, Sunday. But due to the stormy weather in both Jordan and Palestine, Mr Arafat postponed his visit to Tuesday.

During the meeting, attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the King reaffirmed Jordan's rejection of any unilateral Israeli steps that would paralyze peace agreements signed with the Palestinians.

The meeting between the King and Arafat establishes a common Jordanian-Palestinian position before Arafat's visit to Washington to attend a scheduled meeting with US President Clinton. Mr Arafat briefed King Hussein on his plans to meet with US President.

Ross, who wrapped up a four-day visit last Friday, shuttled between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Mr Arafat to try to pave the way for separate meetings they will have with Mr Clinton in 20 and 22 January.

The two leaders also discussed the recent political developments in Israel following



the resignation of Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy, a critic of Netanyahu's peace policy with the Palestinians.

Palestinian President Arafat's latest visit which Palestinian officials in Ramallah said failed to advance deadlocked Israeli-PLO peace talks.

PLO officials said their relations with Jordan have been strained recently over what they said were Israeli attempts to involve the Kingdom in the peace process without the Palestinian National Authority's knowledge.

This summit provided the chance for the two leaders to review bilateral relations and showed that Jordanian-

Palestinian relations are strong enough to stand in the face of all plots and attempts to undermine them.

Following his meeting with the King, President Arafat told Jordan Television that his meeting with the US president is the last chance to save the peace process.

"I hope that President Clinton will be able to convince Netanyahu," to move the peace process forward, Mr Arafat said.

The Palestinian leader asked King Hussein to intensify his efforts to make the upcoming meeting with President Clinton a success.

The Palestinian leader added that he briefed the King on the obstacles the Israelis are creating that

impede progress in the peace process and delay the implementation of the agreements signed between the two sides.

The Israeli army redeployment from rural areas in the West Bank, is among the major issues the Palestinians are demanding and which includes a safe passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and the launching of a seaport and an airport in Gaza.

Israel said that it will not carry out the second stage of Israeli army withdrawal unless the PNA takes tough measures against Palestinian groups that oppose peace with Israel, especially the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Islamic Jihad.

The spirit of Jordanian football is created by the fans

Continued from page 1

people to be waiting for us at the airport with rotten tomatoes, fortunately a kilo of tomatoes was very expensive then. "As you know the word 'loss' doesn't exist in our supporters' dictionary," Bahlouz continues.

Youssef Abu Ghaila, the chief of the Jordanian Supporters League, and also the chief of Al Wehdat's League said "members of the Al Wehdat League must be members of the club, we have 300 supporters in the league alone."

For Mr Abu Ghaila five well-organized supporters are

enough to encourage a team. "When we have a game outside the country, these five supporters, can whip up the support of many others especially those from the Jordanian community and from our 'students' who are studying abroad."

Also, Al Faisaly's supporters are no less enthusiastic about their team. "Al Faisaly is the best team that's why I have supported it for the last 17 years," said Jamal Ahdallah one of the fans.

This 32-year-old supporter claimed that his attitude in the other teams is friendly, but it

is the supporters of their rivals that create the problems.

In Jordan and specially during the games of the two main teams—Al Wehdat and Al Faisaly—fans erupted more than once.

Jerryas Tadros, the famous center-forward in Al Faisaly and in the Jordan's national team and who was hospitalized in the USA at the expense of His Majesty King Hussein, stressed the fact that there is lack of real supporters.

"The majority of the people go to the stadium only for fun, and spend some of their

free time," said Tadros, who will be back to his position after four months when he recovers completely from the successful, surgical operation on his ankle. "I become upset especially when we play against Al Wehdat, some supporters deliberately try to provoke me, so instead I do my best to score."

Dr Bassam Haroun, a professor in the Faculty of Sport in the University of Jordan divides the support into two sections: "First we have to encourage the people to go to the stadium by providing all the necessary facilities like the means of transport, good timing, a better protection inside the stadium."

"Second, we have the support inside the stadium which depends on many factors, first the level of teams, if they play well it will positively affect the people," he says.

As Dr Haroun mentions there are always individualistic behavior that may lead to the anger of supporters and to riots. "If one player doesn't respect the rules or plays in a rough way, this will stir up the people, also we have the mistakes made deliberately or not by our referees."

So what is needed now? "We have to focus in our press and media on those people who only make trouble and ask the police to apprehend them up to the duration of the match; also we must respect penalties against our favorite team or players in a sporting spirit."

Perhaps Al Faisaly defender Mohammad Mahadin puts it more aptly. "In the same match, supporters curse us when we don't score, and cheer for us when we do."



Yousef Amouri holds the cup after Al Wehdat won the Premier League Championship, Saturday, at the Sports City. The beat Al Karmel 3-0. More than 35,000 watched the match. This is the 4th consecutive win for the team.

Israeli conditions toughen US task on peace process

Continued from page 1

avoid implementing the (peace) agreements." Tibi said the Palestinian Authority was preparing a similar list of Israeli violations.

The Cabinet decision made official what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior Israeli officials have said for weeks—that they would, as Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon first suggested, the Israel's withdrawal from more West Bank land to Palestinian fulfillment of obligations spelled out in the Hebron agreement.

In that accord, the Palestinians promised to finish revising their national charter, limit the size of their police

force and work to fight terrorism. Israel, in turn, said it would release Palestinian prisoners and carry out the first step of a three-phase withdrawal from the West Bank by last March. All three phases were to be completed by mid-1998.

Most of the demands in Tuesday's Cabinet decision dealt with Israel's security concerns, a point underlined this week by a high state of alert by Israeli forces against possible attacks from militant Islamic groups. On Tuesday, the third day of alert, extra police and soldiers were deployed nationwide, especially in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, to guard against possi-

ble attacks. Netanyahu told reporters Tuesday that the Cabinet decision was not an "ultimatum," but a manner of honoring past agreements. "We are fulfilling all of our commitments and we expect that the Palestinians will fulfill theirs," the Israeli leader said before meeting with former Secretary of State George Shultz.

But US officials, pointing to the overdue troop pull-backs, say neither side has kept all its promises under the peace agreements. Coming just a week before Clinton is due to meet in Washington with both Netanyahu and Arafat, the Cabinet action also appeared aimed at

shoring up Netanyahu's support among those members of his coalition who most staunchly oppose further concessions to the Palestinians.

US officials have said Clinton hopes to push the deadlocked peace process forward. He is expected to urge Netanyahu to carry out the next redeployment quickly and Arafat to cooperate more closely with Israel in the fight against terrorism. Netanyahu's meeting with Clinton is scheduled for 20 January, with Arafat following him to the White House on 22 January.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Press rocks Press

Syrian media campaign leads to defence

The main issue that dominated the daily press last week was a counterstrike against the Syrian media condemnation campaign of the Jordanian observer participation in the Mediterranean trilateral manoeuvres held last week, by Turkey, Israel and the USA. The Syrian press and television quoted several Jordanian columnists criticizing the decision, to participate in these games and one navy personnel who found the participation as serving no Jordanian interest.

Dr Fahd Al Fanek whose article in Al Ra'i daily was quoted, by Syrian television—particularly parts of his article which says Jordan has no interest in attending these games. For the simple reason that it is not a Mediterranean country, is not a maritime nation and does not possess navy fleet. "If Jordan accepted the invitation, then it was due to American pressure."

Two days later, Dr Fanek criticized what he called the Syrian exploitation of his article and the other articles and comments for their vehement attack on Jordan. He said "in string our views" we were practicing our democratic right to pressure our government to cancel its decision."

But he added, that if the Syrian media is happy with the ammunition that we unintentionally provided, then the bad use of these ammunition are making us stop criticizing the Jordanian step lest it be used "to throw mud on the face of our country."

The writer reminded the Syrian government about their alliance with a foreign country like Iran against an Arab country, which is Iraq, during the 10-year Gulf War in the 1980s. He also reminded the Syrians of their 30-country participation in the US-led "Desert Storm" alliance during the second Gulf War which destroyed the strongest country in modern Arab history, Iraq.

In comparison, Dr Al Fanek said, the attendance of a Jordanian officer to the latest manoeuvres does not deserve to be mentioned.

He also said the Syrian media could hunt our articles which oppose some of our government policies and decisions, they will find many because our country enjoys freedom of expression which the Syrian press could not enjoy, because it is not a free press.

He concluded that we will not change our point of view, we have one protest about the Jordanian observer to the manoeuvres, but we have thousands of protests to the Syrian alliance with Iran, and we still feel the bitterness of the Syrian participation, and the participation of others who attack Jordan today, in the alliance that was led by the US to eliminate the biggest and strongest Arab country [Iraq] for the sake of Israel's security and the domination of Arab oil.



Al Fanek

The lost voice of public speaking

Continued from page 1

Shirley McLean, who used to speak from the Hyde Park Gays and Sapphics platform, says: "Somebody might say: 'I have been to university, and I have got an honours degree' Soper would look at him and say: 'You have been educated beyond your capacity.'"

There are few signs of such wit and subtlety in Hyde Park today. The handful of speakers who address non-religious subjects generally lack charisma, and most of the heckling is crude. The days are long gone when the politically ambitious, such as Walter Padley, a minister in the 1964 Labour government, improved their oratory at Speakers' Corner. Padley's successors recognised they could reach a wider audience through broadcast media. However, it is not as if Britons have suddenly lost the willingness or ability to speak in public.

Valerie Mitchell, director-general of the English Speaking Union, says most young people have an aptitude for public speaking, although those at state schools often have few opportunities to do so. Teaching of the written language takes priority. The ESU runs programmes to offer the chance for children from a wide variety of backgrounds to learn how to express themselves better in public. "When you take public speaking to 14-year-olds, the techniques are grasped immediately," says Mitchell.

There are people who can stand up and have charisma and draw a crowd. That's something that's almost beyond teaching. Mitchell adds that politicians are not a good advert for public speaking: she says their reliance on written scripts and Autocues makes their speeches passionless and overacting. The uniformity and staidness of politics as practised at Westminster have served to dull the

enthusiasm of some potential speakers. "I think it was different in the 1930s and 1940s after the Great Depression," says Dawkins. During those turbulent times, people felt they had an opportunity to induce profound changes.

These days, people rarely use Speakers' Corner to raise issues which they feel are not addressed in parliament. They realise that speeches and mass meetings usually attract scant media coverage, so they hold direct action protests instead.

This has allowed the media to dismiss Speakers' Corner as irrelevant. Some writers have argued that the corner is now a mere relic, because the freedoms it symbolises are well entrenched. The South China Morning Post recently concluded that Hong Kong did not need a Speakers' Corner, adding: "A free society should not need to designate a small corner for people to speak their minds because they should be free to do so anywhere."

Certainly there is little at Speakers' Corner today to inspire visitors. The preachers set up their platforms because it is one of the few public places in London where they can hope for a good audience. But most of the Sunday afternoon crowd come because they hope to see the Speakers' Corner of old; few people are interested in the many billboards which proclaim the shortcomings of humankind and the imminence of plague and damnation.

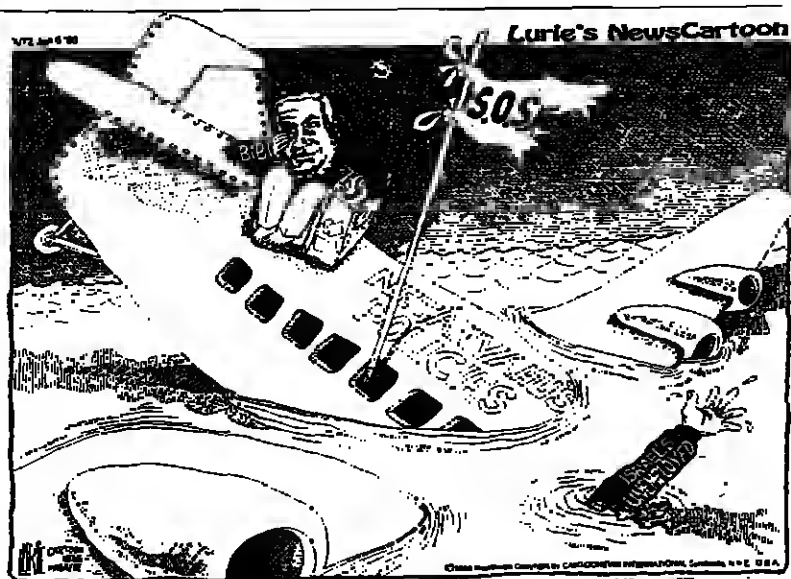
The place once renowned as a forum for the free exchange of diverse views is now dominated by speakers who deal only in absolute certainties, not in the arts of argument. As one Christian speaker put it: "It's His truth. Not your truth or my truth. My job is to tell you that truth."

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"At least I saved the tuxedo I'll wear when I meet Clinton!"

(News Item: The resignation of Foreign Minister Levy left Prime Minister Netanyahu with a very shaky coalition. His peace talks are going nowhere, his international standing is plummeting, and Israel's unemployment is soaring to dangerous proportions.)

Our Say...

Putting an end to Algeria's blood-bath

SINCE THE beginning of Ramadan and the new year, hundreds of Algerian villagers have been massacred in cold blooded rituals that have shocked the world. With no end in sight to the blood-bath, the number of innocent casualties is rising by the day—in one incident alone it was reported that 400 people, the entire population of one village in the western Relizane Province, were butchered.

For the Algerian people, this nightmare has been going on for almost six years, ever since general elections results were revoked leading to a militant confrontation between government forces and a number of Muslim fundamentalist groups. The bloody conflict has claimed the lives of over 65,000 Algerians so far.

In the absence of a serious dialogue paving the way for a political settlement, Algeria's killing fields will continue to dominate the life of Algerians for many years to come. Caught in the middle of this horrific showdown are the people of this large and important Arab country, many of whom have perished because of their sentiments towards party or the other.

After years of watching from the sidelines, the Europeans have now decided to send a delegation to initiate dialogue with the central government. The Algerian government, through Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf, has announced that it will allow the European delegation to visit, but rejected any foreign intervention in the violence. Attaf denied his government had agreed to an inquiry into the massacres.

The Arab side too could not intervene in what the government in Algeria considers as an internal matter. But is the deliberate and consistent liquidation of intellectuals, politicians, businessmen, farmers and workers in this country of 26 million a local affair?

It is clear that both sides to the confrontation are bent on destroying each other. The government, backed by the military, has used the crisis to settle scores with its political opponents. As such its human rights record is riddled with violations.

Similarly, the mainstream Islamist movement, the FIS, has lost control of the many splinter groups that have run wild in the countryside spreading terror and mayhem.

But it is not all black and white. There are sinister forces at work. Victims have accused the military of carrying out some of the massacres, while others confirmed that radical Muslims stand behind their ordeals. At any rate, it is clear that Algeria's blood-bath does not promise to end soon as rouge operators on both sides take charge of fulfilling their death missions.

The Arab world cannot ignore any longer the Algerian tragedy. If the Europeans have managed to overcome their differences and decided to initiate contacts with the government, then the Arabs can do the same. In fact, the Algerian situation offers an opportunity for Europe and the Arabs to work together to find a solution to a crisis that is a threat to them both.

Notes from the Levant

Post blizzard contemplations: Trials and tribulations in the Netanyahu era

By Osama El-Sherif

THE EASTERN Mediterranean region has been blanketed by a carpet of snow extending from central Turkey to the southern hamlets of Jordan. The one-day blizzard brought life to a stand-still in the countries of the region. It was a peaceful pause, albeit a deceptive one. Underneath the idyllic landscape of this ancient land, lay the embers of tension and turmoil.

In Israel, the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu has survived a no confidence vote, but again it emerged weakened after a series of blows and divisions within the ruling coalition government. For the opposition Labor party and its allies, the narrow defeat of the no confidence motion revived hopes of an imminent downfall of a government that is dividing Israelis and straining relations between the Zionist state and its closest allies. For the shaken Netanyahu alliance, the vote drove the beleaguered premier even further to the right as he recruited supporters from the small religious parties.

If 1998 promises anything for the key players in the Middle East peace process, it is the hope that Netanyahu may soon succumb to pressures and leave his post in disgrace allowing for fresh elections and a chance for breathing life back into the ailing peace process. But apart from this, it is unlikely that we will see a fundamental change in the policy of the current Israeli government.

The mood of pessimism has been strengthened with the fact that US Special Middle East Envoy Dennis Ross has returned to Washington empty-handed after fruitless attempts to persuade Israel's leaders to commit to a redeployment plan agreed upon in the Oslo agreements. Ross' failure came few days before an important summit meeting in Washington between President Clinton and Netanyahu to be followed by another meeting between Clinton and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. With Israel refusing to commit to a specific withdrawal plan and schedule, the Middle East peace process is unlikely to budge.

While the degeneration of the US-sponsored peace process continues, all other variables to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to regional instability seem to have gone into deep winter hibernation. The Arab League is still crippled and unable to formulate a united Arab response to the looming dangers of polarization, alliance building and foreign intervention. While Israel finds it easy to renege on its commitments

under the much celebrated Oslo Accords, it is working diligently to neutralize and isolate its potential and real enemies in the region.

The controversial naval maneuvers bringing together Turkey, Israel and the United States, with Jordan observing, last week, sent different signals to different parties in the region. For the Arabs, the war games extended beyond their "search and rescue" objective. They signaled the launching of a much talked about American-led strategic alliance in the East Mediterranean region which gives Syria, Iraq and Iran genuine causes for worry.

Apart from this, the Europeans, much as the Arabs, find themselves in the unenviable position of having to "observe" without meaningful interaction. Both the Arabs and Europe, are in full agreement on what is required in order to reset the course of the peace process so that it delivers a just and lasting settlement. But both lack the political clout and will to pressure the Americans, who have hijacked the process, into accepting their point of view.

The irony is that the Americans too seem to have been caught in the web of a process gone astray. Apart from paying an occasional lip-service to the Arab side, they are reluctant or incapable of reversing the course of the run-away peace process whose fate now lies solely in the hands of Benjamin Netanyahu.

With this in mind, one is bound to believe that unless Netanyahu is brought down by the internal, and unpredictable, forces of Israeli politics, he will continue to dominate the scene by himself. And if he survives, as he seems to have done so far, no one can stop him from fulfilling his agenda.

It is this agenda that carries within it the seeds of a major turmoil in the region in the coming future. Let's assume that Netanyahu weathers the political storms ahead and buys himself precious time to carry out his solemn duty of putting the Oslo Accords in a deep freeze while unleashing a sustained program of fanning and expanding settlements in East Jerusalem and others in occupied areas in the West Bank and Gaza. By the end of this year, he would literally isolate Jerusalem from the rest of Arab areas, create a network of Jewish settlements that would make it impossible to connect Arab cities and villages at any time in the future. By the end of this year, Netanyahu would have created a whole new West Bank; one that cannot be divided, shared or given back.

This gloomy scenario is not new. The systematic Judaization of Palestinian lands has been going on for decades. But at no point in time did this organized colonization reach its apex as it does today. By the end of this year, even the Oslo Accords will seem archaic and out of date.

Netanyahu will continue to apply pressure on the Palestinian authority, hoping that it chokes on the small piece of land that it had managed to get under the previous Labor government. A return of a wave of terror will hurt the PNA more than Netanyahu. A Palestinian debacle, whereby Hamas and its allies topple the PNA and take over, will invite a stern Israeli retaliation including the omnipresent threat of re-occupation. Arab reaction is nowhere to be found.

This is how Netanyahu and his aides read the picture today. This is what motivates them into carrying out the final phase in the conspiracy to devour the last inch of Palestinian land. Meanwhile, the circle of "tamed" or "neutralized" countries around Israel is completed. Those who have not made peace with Israel, at Israel's conditions, like Syria, will find themselves isolated and vulnerable by the end of the year. Those who want to be "rehabilitated" like Iran and Iraq will have to acknowledge certain conditions; accepting Israel's right to exist and joining the peace process.

As the curtain begins to fall on the 20th century, the Arab world finds itself divided, penetrated and without a common goal. At the turn of the century the Arabs were waking up to the fact that Palestine was the target of a sinister imperial conspiracy. At least three wars later, Palestine and other Arab territories were at threat by a Zionist entity allied to an American superpower. By the end of this century, the entire Arab world is paying the price; from the Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean.

The tragedy, as always, is that we are the last to see the approaching storm. And when we do, our reactions are always undervalued.

This is why I followed with remorse and pity the news of the trial in France of the Muslim philosopher Roger Garaudy, who is accused of questioning crimes against humanity in his controversial book *Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*. The 84-year-old writer feels abandoned by his Arab and Muslim brethren. As I glanced at the white layer of snow and ice covering the eerie landscape around me this week, I shared with Garaudy his sense of frustration and despair.

Middle East Bear by Khairi Janbek Political maturity

IT'S PART of growing up and acquiring more political maturity for outsiders, to think about the nature of things crucial to them, then set their short and long term objectives in a realistic manner. National interest is sacrosanct, and no nation would give priority to others before their own interests.

This paradigm has always been applicable internationally, in the Arab world, and Jordan. Perhaps, because we have always put the regional interests of our Arab, and at times, Muslim brothers, before our own, it has become a force of habit to expect Jordan to do so without thinking that this country does have its own particular interests, and specific circumstances in the context of international relations.

Our Hashemite leadership named our Army, the Arab Army, and it is still the Arab Army. We have always had our country open to all our brothers from the Arab and Islamic countries without any hesitation, and have stood at all costs in solidarity with our brethren, even without thinking of our own circumstances.

Undoubtedly, Jordan is still the legitimate inheritor of the legacy of the Great Arab Revolt, and its fate dictates its sense of belonging, but Jordan is also a nation state that has its own requirements, and its own particular interests. If we have always put the interests of others before our own, it does not mean that our own interests should be subject to the will of others, and the whims of the fickle. We neither need to justify our actions to anyone, nor justify the actions of our brethren, even when their actions seem to be unjustifiable.

As if Jordan does not have the right to think and do what is right for itself, while the rest have this prerogative, the recent maneuvers in the Mediterranean, and the sending of a Jordanian observer to them, has been blown out into a test of Arabism and Arab loyalty in the most absurd manner and phantasm of theatrics. Accusations started flying, and we started justifying, when in effect, we have always called for Arab coordination and cooperation at all levels, to see it materialize (when it happens) without our participation and even without our knowledge.

When everybody around us looks for their own interest, and do not compromise, we cannot allow ourselves to be defenseless in the face of uncertainties, and precarious circumstances. Many of our brethren blatantly contradict their own ideologies without even blinking, and we all have to put up, others relate to us only in the past tense and in pre-Islamic patriarchal terms, while for some, dealing with Europe and the USA directly for their own purposes is more profitable and does not require any permission from anyone.

Therefore, we cannot but do what is most important for us, and carry on without having to justify what we do to any party. It is logical not to grab any opportunity to advance our knowledge and our experience? and does it serve the Arab world for Jordan to be weak and defenseless? Our path is clear, and our intentions are even clearer, regardless of those who criticize us knowing only too well our objectives and our beliefs.

However, it is very sad to see a segment of our population, with all their good intentions, remain stuck in a time warp of their own making, still attempting to set an example for the whole Arab nationalist movement, to the extent of even sacrificing their own country in the process. Our compatriots have to understand that the cause of Jordan is just as important as the large Arab cause, and if they do not rise to the defence of their own people and their own country, they are no better than those elements who relish seeing us weak.

Global solidarity needed to save democratic order

By Mikhail Gorbachev

MOSCOW (IPS)—It is increasingly clear that the historic form of man's existence, that allowed him to create modern civilization with seemingly unlimited possibilities and conveniences, has bred a host of problems that threaten the existence of all humans and which demand immediate attention.

In principle, people are capable of addressing these problems. The 20th century has taught them a great deal, and the current environment of globalization provides the conditions for dealing with what is the underside of man's domination of nature.

The survival and development of humanity depends increasingly on its capacity for deep spiritual reformation, which entails fundamental changes in the social, economic and cultural coordinates of development.

Globalization is bringing about changes in political principles and in the structure and distribution of power. We have witnessed the rapid expansion of the sphere of global politics, which for the last stage of development had been restricted to the settlement of problems in war and peace by applying the standards of international law.

The need for worldwide solidarity in the face of the encroaching threats to humankind's existence inevitably reduces the range of policies that individual countries can pursue while multiplying the number of regional, continental and global problems.

Nonetheless, sovereign countries remain the foundation of the world community and a prudent balance between national and global policy—as well as the optional distribution of their responsibilities and their organic interaction, is extremely important.

The main question is: how realistic is such an arrangement, and is it possible to overcome the opposition of the forces of national and group egoism to take advantage of this unique chance to create a democratic world order?

The end of the bipolar world has not led to the expected democratization of the system of international relations as a whole, nor to the elimination of hegemony or a reduced use of

force. Indeed, there is mounting temptation to begin a new round of geopolitical games and attempt a revision of the spheres of influence.

The process of disarmament which was made possible by the new mentality of the post-bipolar world, has tangibly slowed down. Certain conflicts have been replaced with others which are no less bloody.

The high step forward of the end of the Cold War was followed by a small step backwards. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that the possibilities for the democratic restructuring of the international system have not been exhausted.

We simply must recognize that the task is far more complicated than the politicians who undertook it 10 years ago expected. It is still unclear what will take the place of the US-USSR bipolar world—monopolism, multipolarism, a new bipolarism with the United States and another superpower, or, finally, the democratic management of global affairs with the help of generally acceptable mechanisms and procedures.

Today, the United States unmistakably is the world leader and naturally wishes to retain that role, as shown by, among other things, the plans for NATO enlargement.

Unipolarism and bipolarism alike are prompted first and foremost by security problems. One cannot exclude the possibility of a world war developing at some time in the future as a consequence of a new armed confrontation, the spontaneous expansion of a local conflict to a global scale, the malfunction of military hardware, the unauthorized launching of a missile with nuclear warheads, or similar incidents.

However, at present there is no direct danger of a world war involving the use of weapons of mass annihilation and the threat of the extinction of life on earth. Nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons are the last remaining material factors of former confrontation.

The principal threats of today's world are economic, financial and scientific-technical problems, and they will determine the course of global development.



Gorbachev

Given these circumstances, movement towards a multipolar world is only natural and legitimate. Even in the United States, which obviously strives for the preservation of its position as global leader, pragmatism—that is, the recognition that such leadership costs too much—is more and more dominant.

Furthermore, the idea of a unipolar world is challenged by an increasingly powerful China.

Multipolarism offers numerous opportunities for the further economic flowering of Japan and Western Europe.

True, it is often alleged in western Europe that multipolarism leads to confrontation but, even in situations of extreme confrontation in the bipolar world, there were certain rules which neither the US nor the USSR ever violated. The multipolar world is sure to elaborate its own laws of behavior.

Russia is joining the process

One thing is clear. Russia is in favour of a multipolar world, which it sees as the condition for building a democratic world order.

Mikhail Gorbachev, president of the Gorbachev Foundation and former president of the Soviet Union

Sectarian bloodshed in Pakistan

LAHORE—The sectarian attack that killed and maimed dozens in this troubled Punjab capital city last Sunday morning is a continuation of the bloody frenzy that swept Pakistan last year.

The year 1997 was the bloodiest in the 50-year history of Pakistan, with an unprecedented number of people across the Punjab province falling victim to the violence. Sunday's killings take the official toll in sectarian killings to about 150 in the past 12 months.

Official figures put the death toll in Pakistan's most populous province last year at 122, far greater than any previous year, while unofficial estimates claim over 170 people died in sect-motivated clashes in the 12 months.

Just two weeks ago, some of the country's most wanted

terrorists escaped from police custody. Government fears that because of their escape, the spectre of sectarian violence may revisit with a greater vengeance in 1998, have chillingly come true.

Academics have been emphasising that tougher laws and greater vigilance alone will not put the sectarian genie back into the bottle. Unless harmony and tolerance is brought back to inter-sect relations, the killings will continue, they have been stressing. And how right they have been proved. Despite a crackdown on wanted criminals and proclaimed offenders, and enhanced police vigilance at religious sites, the country is back to square one.

Usually the sectarian clashes, attacks and counter-attacks involve the Sunni and Shia groups. But recent develop-

ments portend dangerous trends.

The patterns of killings, which emerged in the past 12 months, took a new and more dangerous turn, when the hitherto uninvolved Barailvi sect of Sunnis, a majority in Pakistan, was dragged into the sectarian fray.

The clashes, which broke out in Multan three months ago between the proponents of two sects from the majority Sunni community, the Deobandis and Barailvis, added a new element to the country's sectarian strife.

Until then the sectarian violence in Punjab had involved militants from

the Sunni and minority Shia communities, claiming hundreds of lives in the last one decade.

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Letters to the editor: Will be edited for brevity, must contain name and address of sender.

Business scene

■ Al Ahlia Securities Co. holds fourth place among the most active companies in the world, in terms of investment, sales service and market trading. This is according to a Reuters annual survey, which covered the views of more than 200 directors of senior investment institutions on activities of share dealing companies in emerging markets. Al Ahlia is a brokerage company at the Amman Financial Market. In 1997, the company held top rank among 28 brokerage firms at the AFM. It's share was 13.3 percent of total dealings at the parallel and regular markets. The company conducted transactions with foreign companies estimated at nearly JD 35 million in 1997.

■ The Bank of Jordan is leading the first loan certificate in favor of the International Tobacco and Cigarettes Co. The loan certificate which is worth JD 3.5 million is over five years and will be offered through private subscription for Jordanian, Arab and foreign investors. Issuing such kind of debt tools is supposed to create an active market for bonds in the Kingdom. Also it comes in line with the instructions of the Central Bank of Jordan to enhance management of liquidity surpluses through using investment tools. On another aspect, the Bank has recently established a joint investment fund, BOL Global Capital Reserved Fund. The fund will enable investors to benefit from diversified investment opportunities available in international markets. For example, it will invest in various activities including gold markets, foreign currencies, government and companies' bonds in addition to buying shares in European, American and Asian markets. Also, small investors could benefit from the above mentioned markets, because the lowest rate for subscription is limited at \$10,000.

■ Saudi investor Prince Walid bin Talal is one of the shareholders of the Business Touristic Investments Co., set up at a capital of JD 100 million. The company will be in charge of carrying out touristic projects to develop the northern coast of Aqaba. The giant enterprise involves a touristic village in addition to sports, and hotels facilities.

Foreign Exchange

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US \$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1508
DM	0.4124	0.4145
Sfr	0.4801	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
ITP (100)	0.0419	0.0421

CE certification, another way to enhance quality assurance

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

AS time moves rapidly towards new global alliances, economic blocs and organizations, local industrial companies find themselves obliged to catch up and introduce greater quality standards in line with international specifications.

So far, about 65 Jordanian companies have been ISO 9000 certified, the prime international accreditation awarded to products adhering to high standard and quality.

Getting the ISO 9000 certificate (including its four categories 9001 to 9004) is no longer sufficient to enter international markets.

"After Jordan has signed its partnership agreement with the EU, it is not only enough to be ISO 9000 certified," says Ms Dalia Osama AIL, marketing manager to the Petra Engineering Industries Co.

"Any company which wants to deal with European markets or export its products to Europe should have the CE certificate," she adds.

Petra Engineering, which received its ISO certification in April 1996, was the first Jordanian company to be awarded the CE certificate. But what is the CE?

"CE stands for Conformance Européenne (a French term) which indicates that the company's product complies with certain directives notified by the notification body (who is a third party that supervises all

steps to get the certificate or the mark)," elaborates Mr Mohammad Sami Taffal, deputy quality manager in the same company.

The CE guarantees that the product is safe and means that all possible risks (concerning the operator, the worker and the user) are covered. Also notices and warnings are commonly annexed to the product to make users aware of the right utilization of the system.

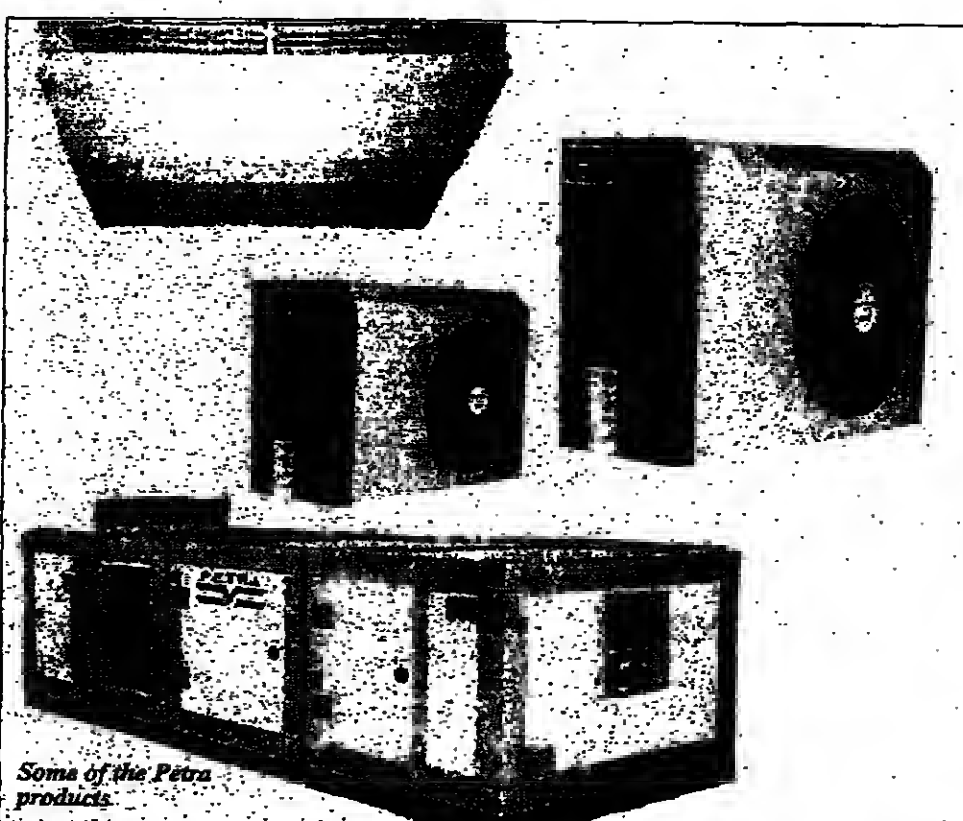
It was not a difficult task for Petra Engineering to receive the CE mark. "We started [the procedure] in July 1997, and obtained the certificate in December, of course this is a short time as we already have the base and documentation for quality

certification," Ms Ali tells *The Star*. Petra Engineering was established in 1987 and is one of the leading companies in the region in designing and manufacturing air conditioning/refrigeration.

"The CE certificate is usually given for companies producing items bearing risks." There are two criteria she adds "the low risk (mostly covering all industrial products and services)." The CE award for Petra Engineering is in this category.

Petra Engineering covers the local market, adjacent Arab countries, the Gulf, North Africa and Europe.

Also companies manufacturing children's toys have to abide to the CE mark to guarantee that they are made in a way that doesn't harm kids playing with them. Most toys are made



Some of the Petra products.

of a soft plastic material, or designed in away that brings no risk to children.

However, the high risk criterion applies to military manufacturers.

Referring to the advantages of obtaining the European CE mark, Mr Taffal maintains "we are very proud to be awarded the certificate. Before, we used to deal with European markets, but now we think that new doors are open in front of our exports to Europe. Ms Ali agrees, adding that the CE is a requirement in Europe whereas

it is an advantage outside (in other countries).

It was through the consultation of the globally known Lloyds Register, that Petra Engineering got the CE mark. She explained that "we have met all directives considered as a prerequisite for such accreditation." These include three directives covering: Machinery, electromagnetic compatibility and low voltage directive.

The safety stickers stamped on any product guarantees it's safety from the manufacturers. "But for us in Petra, we have

got the CE certificate through a third party which is the Lloyds Register," says Mr Taffal.

Petra Engineering was not only the first Jordanian company to get the CE mark, but the first to obtain such accreditation through the Lloyds Register in the Middle East.

The two engineers said that all Jordanian companies, especially those looking to promote their sales in Europe should seek the CE mark to enter the European markets strongly. ■

1997 Arab advertising harvest

Ladders and snakes on the growth track

THE YEAR 1997 is the year of the Pan Arab satellite television channels. They expanded their advertising and marketing departments, and saw a 27% increase in their advertising revenues over 1996.

They generated \$202 million in 1997. Pan Arab took 66 percent market share for the Arab world local and regional advertising on television.

The Levant, AGCC and Pan Arab media generated \$154 billion. The bulk of the 44 percent growth is mostly attributed to the high performance of the Egyptian and Pan Arab media.

But the total AGCC local and regional advertising scene is rocky. The 25% pace it picked up in 1996 slowed down in 1997, and remained shy of exceeding the forecasted \$1 billion mark. The minimal \$1.06 billion of advertising revenues generated in 1997, AGCC and Pan Arab media increased by 13 percent over 1996.

The rude awakening has rung for the past 3 years. 1997 only sounded the alarm bells, with a total of \$99 million advertising revenues in 1997, local TV registered a 23% drop from 1996 levels.

The market share of television, newspapers and magazines have remained nearly stable (28%, 43% and 20% respectively). Television did however gain a 3 percent share, whereas newspapers lost two points share. Radio, outdoor and video advertising combined, remain muted at 6 percent.

At individual market levels, only the Pan Arab media being assigned, a separate Pan-market enjoyed a spectacular growth where its \$302 advertising revenues in 1997, 30% improvement over 1996, with all the credit going to satellite TV.

The Pan Arab satellite television market share of 66% dwarfs that of the Pan Arab magazines sector, which saw a slight dip from 38% in 1996 to 37% in 1997. In nominal terms, the magazines advertising revenues have remained stable in 1997 at \$33 million.

For a total of \$328 million, ad spend in 1997, the Saudi advertising market seems to be at a standstill. This description is certainly an understatement of the advertising dynamics in Saudi Arabia and indeed in the region as a whole.

By its sheer population size, Saudi Arabia constitute about 70% of the AGCC populations combined, and it seems that regional advertisers together with local advertisers from Saudi Arabia have been the major contributors to the well-being of the Pan-Arab media in general, and the satellite television in particular.

In all AGCC local markets, the magazines sector has not fared well in 1997, but the newspapers certainly did better. The latter have improved their market share from 36% in 1996 to 63% in 1997. Even with the onslaught of the Pan Arab satellite television, the advertising activity in the local AGCC newspapers is estimated at \$466 million registering a healthy 11% nominal growth over 1996.

The United Arab Emirates has been another local market where the advertising activity seems to have stalled in 1997. Standing at \$190 million in 1997, the local television takes most of the brunt of this pause, with its share shrinking from 21% to 17% between 1996 and 1997. However, both the UAE newspapers and the magazines had average performance in 1997. Increases in the revenues of these two sectors

have helped to stabilize the market at nearly the 1996 level.

In terms of growth rate, Kuwait has only marginally outperformed the remaining AGCC markets. Advertising revenues rose by 3% to \$137 in 1997. Kuwait is the third largest AGCC market in terms of advertising activity, assuming a share of 21%, running a close second to UAE (25%) and a distant third from Saudi Arabia (44%).

The level of the advertising growth in Kuwait appears to be largely concentrated in the newspapers sector. With a further consolidation of its market share at 62% in 1997, this sector grew by 14%, reaching US \$97 million. Whereas the magazines sector has grown by only half the rate at 6% in 1997.

The economic and demographic structure of the other AGCC countries like Bahrain, Qatar and Oman provided these markets with smaller shares of advertising activity. Oman has maintained a steady growth rate. Bahrain seemed to have rebounded from its 1995-1996 dip of \$18.5 million and increased to \$26 million in 1997. Qatar's performance was equally encouraging: its 18% growth has earned it \$26 million in 1997.

In Bahrain, there were no surprise in the performance of local television. All the \$7 million increase came from the newspapers and the magazines, equally.

In Qatar, the television had to settle for even smaller share, with all the advertising growth generated by the newspapers. The newspapers in Qatar promise more dominance of the advertising market (88%).

Advertising revenues for newspapers in Oman were lukewarm in 1997. With their market share shrinking by five percentage points to 62%, television

and magazines have both performed better than in the previous year.

The year 1997 offers a further demonstration of the powerful role of the Pan Arab satellite television. More importantly the Pan Arab satellite television, as it has been evolving in 1996/97 demonstrates an outstanding illustration of how the contribution of pro-active TV channels locally and regionally can further

snowball the advertising industry.

Pan Arab satellite TV has a 66 percent share of total regional and local television advertising, which corresponds to its regional overall television audience share. But reliance on Pan Arab satellite television as the main horse-power for growth generation is bound to have serious ramifications on local advertising. ■

Indonesia calmer after IMF promises to accelerate bailout

By Keith Richburg

HONG KONG—Indonesians enjoyed a badly needed respite last Friday from the near daily battering of their stock and currency markets after the International Monetary Fund announced plans to accelerate its bailout of the troubled country.

But the continuing political and economic uncertainty brought more panic buying in Jakarta's shops, new calls for President Suharto to resign, and additional carnage on stock markets across the region.

Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, was reportedly calm despite early runs on stores by thousands of jittery residents stocking up on staples. Indonesian television showed footage of warehouses stocked with rice and other supplies in an effort to stave off panic and stem the crisis, but people were lined up even before stores opened last Friday.

Meanwhile, the country's powerful armed forces were placed on low-level alert to deal with any civil turmoil. Residents said they saw increased military patrols on the capital's streets but few other signs of the heightened state of readiness.

"The situation is now safe and stable. People shouldn't worry," armed forces spokesman Brig. Gen. A. Wahab Mokodongan said.

The mood on the streets was reported to be less panicked than Thursday, when the currency, the rupiah, took a dramatic plunge to 10,000 to the dollar, before settling at around 9,700, prompting a spate of rumors about Suharto's health and a possible military coup. Friday, the currency rebounded somewhat, closing at 7,910.

The rebound reflected what analysts said was relief in response to the IMF's willingness to negotiate with Indonesia to rescue a \$43 billion bailout package that is in danger of falling apart.

President Clinton telephoned Suharto last Thursday night to

underscore his support for Indonesia and his concern that Jakarta abide by the program agreed with the IMF. A spokesman in Jakarta said afterward that the Indonesian leader is "determined to implement seriously" the program for economic recovery.

Even as Jakarta's crisis atmosphere abated somewhat, the country remains in the grip of political uncertainty, with renewed questions about the health and vigor of Suharto, 76, and bold public demands for him to step aside.

The English-language Jakarta Post ran an unusual front-page story Friday quoting both a former cabinet minister and a university political scientist as calling for a change in leadership, with the latter musing on words in saying Suharto should quit.

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Business Chronicle

Arab Trade Organization, step on the right track

THOUGH THE need for joint Arab cooperation, mainly in the economic field, was stressed repeatedly in Arab and regional conferences, the idea remains ink on paper, a far-fetched dream that is still to be realized.

The Arab Economic Unity Council (AEUC) for instance, which was established in 1954 still survives but only just. In its more than 40-year history, the council failed to overcome barriers for a unified economic strategy. Experts attribute such failure to the narrow-minded Arab mentality which hinders easy movement of Arab capital and trade. Each country is still adopting tough measures to ensure protection of its local products and worried about competition from its counterparts. Such an individual outlook has blocked the way in front of economic integration and economic benefit to all.

Nonetheless, although a distant dream, some Arab states continue to put forward the concept of a Common Arab Market.

The convening of the MENA summit conferences since the signing of the peace accords between some Arab countries and Israel (and in spite of the ups and downs in relations), is seen by some analysts as a step forward. It's true that nothing great has so far materialized but at least there have been many gallant attempts.

Participants in the Cairo MENA Summit again called for the revival of an Arab Common Market; a preparatory committee was even appointed to follow up the matter, but tangible results are yet to bear fruit.

Lately Arab countries have realized the new rapid ongoing developments and the hazards of the new surge towards globalization, world markets and the tearing down of trade barriers.

In its recent meeting, the Arab League has declared the establishment of an Arab Trade Organization (ATO) to eliminate customs and administrative restrictions. This should be given priority on the Arab agenda and must be a pre-requisite for entering into international blocs for Arab economic cooperation and coordination.

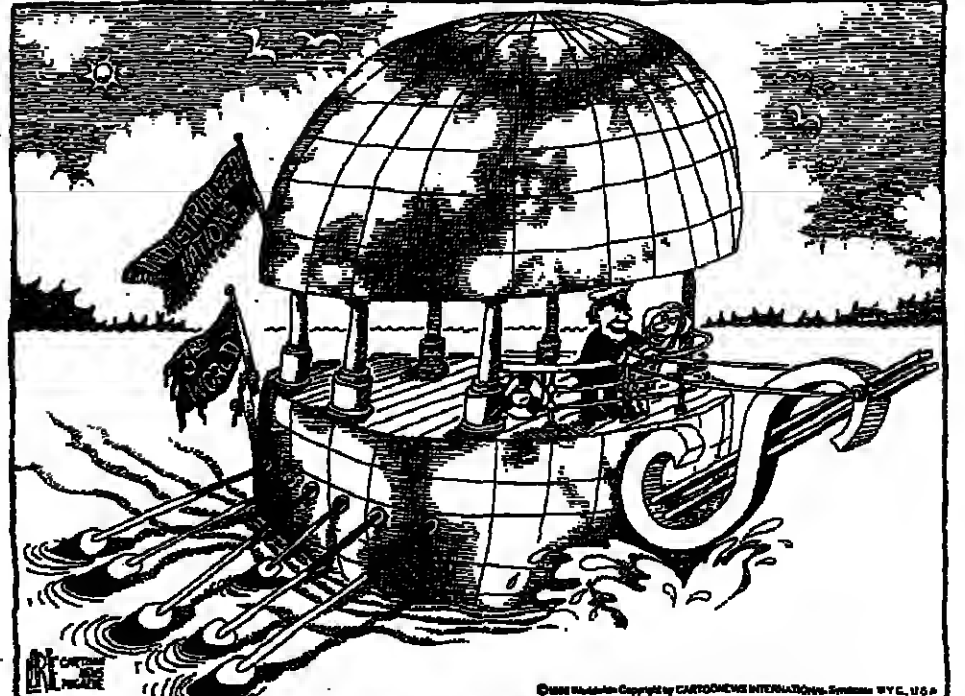
But first things, first. To start, we must establish free trade zone which experts argue is a step on the right track and could pave the way for the creation of the old-new dream, the Arab Common Market.

The situation is critical and serious action and appropriate planning is required to live up to the challenges and achieve regional economic prosperity. This means that customs duties must be unified before allowing the free exchange and movement of capital and manpower to flow between Arab countries. Finally a monetary and banking integrity could be achieved. The EU took about 50 years to meet the requirements of these stages, therefore we should at long last take the initiative and start on sound bases. Already bilateral commercial ties between some Arab countries do exist in the form of protocol or other agreements and such could help to boost inter-Arab trade and guarantee positive results in near future.

So far, the size of inter-Arab trade is still below aspirations, about nine percent but if the ATO is set up then a light could be seen at the end of a tunnel.

Last Monday a Jordanian delegation headed by Dr Mohammad Al Halaika, general secretary at the Ministry of Industry and Trade left for Cairo to take part in the meetings of the follow-up committee of the executive program of the agreement of the Arab Trade Organization. According to the agenda of the lately approved executive program, trade exchange between Arab countries is to be enhanced and all goods will be gradually exempted from customs tariffs within 10 years starting from this year till 2007. However, any member in the program is allowed to conclude mutual exemptions that precede the fixed time. ■

Lurie's NewsCartoon



"Indeed, I do feel sorry for them, but we're all in the same boat."

News Item: The Global Warming issue focuses world's attention to another important issue: the gap between rich and poor nations. Even Earth's basic survival issue, the severe over-use of gas emissions, couldn't make the rich countries understand the danger.)

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Military maneuvers a first for new Middle East partners

By Marjorie Müller

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—Suggesting a new strategic alliance in the Middle East, the Israeli and Turkish navies, accompanied by a US destroyer, carried out their first joint military maneuvers on Wednesday with a Jordanian admiral aboard to observe the search-and-rescue drill.

All four nations rejected Iranian and Arab charges that the exercise with five warships and more than 1,000 sailors in the eastern Mediterranean was aggressive, saying it was strictly humanitarian and had no military objective.

"There is nothing here directed against any other country in the region or elsewhere," Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said aboard an Israeli ship. "There is no conspiracy. The whole purpose is to create coordination and cooperation for the sake of saving human lives and to work together in the Mediterranean basin."

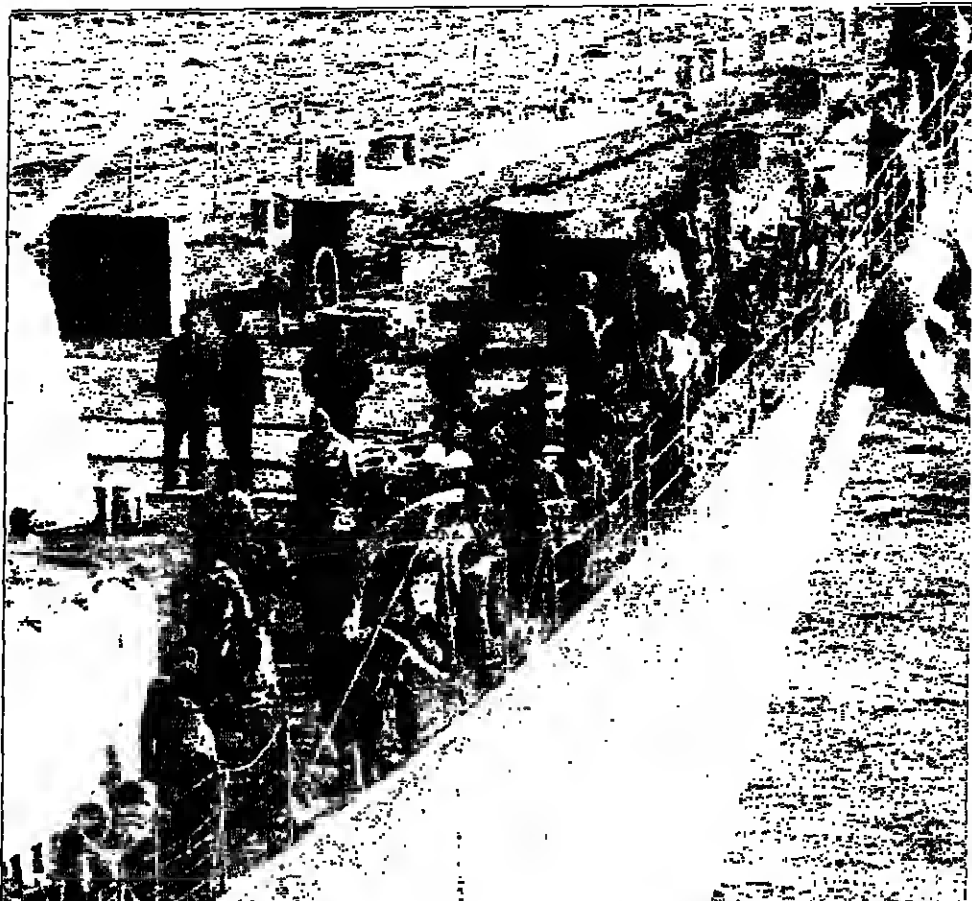
Still, security cooperation among Israel, Turkey and the United States clearly illustrated a new power axis in the Middle East and the axiom that "My enemy's enemy is my friend."

Israel, a Jewish state, and Turkey, a secular state with a Muslim majority, signed their first military cooperation agreement in February 1996 and have been forging ties at a rapid pace since. They share a common enemy in Syria, which is sandwiched between the two countries, and both see Iran and Iraq as potential threats.

Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 and sees the bilateral relationship as a card it might need to draw on one day if hostilities arise with its neighbors—Syria and Iraq.

Meanwhile, Turkey has thrown its lot in with the United States, which has its own conflicts with Iraq and Iran. Israel is the main US ally in the region.

"The maneuvers symbolize



Latest military maneuvers create much controversy in the region

the new Middle East, a new balance of power in which Turkey and Israel cooperate and the United States supports this cooperation, despite Arab screams," said Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv.

The origin of the new Israeli-Turkish relationship dates to 1994, when Turkey upgraded its diplomatic relations with Israel after the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord and the two countries traded ambassadors.

Israel and Turkey subsequently signed military cooperation pacts for Israel to

upgrade US-made Turkish fighter jets with electronic equipment worth nearly \$700 million and to use Turkish air-space for military training exercises.

This lets Turkey import new Western technology without strings: Israel, meantime, gets to practice the kind of operations it would launch in a war against countries like Iraq and Iran. Israel's own air space is too small for such exercises.

Military analysts also believe the agreement includes an exchange of military intelligence and gives Israel a listening post for Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Israel and Syria, technically,

remain in a state of war. Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Middle East War and held on to the territory in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Several Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process with Israel are based in the Syrian capital of Damascus and Syria supports the Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas fighting to oust Israel from occupied southern Lebanon.

Turkey and Syria have similar disputes. Syria lays claim to Turkish territory and complains that Ankara's efforts to dam the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is cutting off its water source. Turkey, meanwhile, accuses Syria of supporting

separatist Kurds who have been fighting the Turkish government for 13 years.

The growing Israeli-Turkish relationship, which also includes about \$800 million a year in trade, has drawn Arab countries closer together, including one-time enemies such as Iraq and Syria, or Iraq and Iran.

On Wednesday, Iran and most of the Arab world condemned the exercises and Jordan's decision to send an observer, which was portrayed as a prelude to active participation in a US-sponsored military axis taking shape around Israel and Turkey.

Mohammed Salmaan, the Syrian information minister, described the naval war games as "a show of force reminiscent of the climate of the Cold War that is intended to put pressure on Syria."

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Said Sahaf urged Turkey last week to withdraw from the drill, calling it "a provocative act against the Arab nation."

And Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohammadi as saying the exercises were designed to help Israel increase its influence in the region. Egypt, which has a peace agreement with Israel, declined to observe the exercise alongside Jordan. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amir Moussa on Tuesday described the maneuvers as a "negative step in light of the (Palestinian) peace process. The timing of these drills is wrong. Egypt does not see any reason for staging them at this time."

Political analysts said Egypt fears Turkey's relationship with the United States and its growing political strength in a region where Egypt sees itself as preeminent.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

● The court hearings of the French philosopher Roger Garaudy in Paris continue to arouse public interest. Garaudy is charged of anti-Semitism, something which he strongly rejects. French newspapers are also taking much interest in the hearings.

Political observers say that they are surprised by the way they are treating the case, pointing out that Garaudy and his supporters are getting a lot of media coverage. The 84-year-old, who has written 53 books on philosophy, history and religion, and whose works were translated into 22 languages, held his guard in front of the judge in one of the courts in Paris.

He said he is a firm believer in greater cooperation between the three monotheistic religions. He also told the judge that he was accused for something which he was: anti-Semitism. He added that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all semite "and I respect the Jewish religion."

The philosopher who has earlier converted to Islam, said there was a great difference between Zionism and Judaism, the first being a political movement "which I struggle against."



Garaudy: An earlier photo taken whilst he visited Amman in 1996

US looks for shift toward more moderates in Iran

By R. Jeffrey Smith

WASHINGTON—In September 1993, Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei instructed his senior foreign affairs officials that their "first duty" was to cooperate with "intelligence" officers working to undermine secular and Western influence in the region and export a fundamentalist Islamic revolution.

To some diplomatic officials in the Middle East, this secret speech by Khamenei—the substance of which was confirmed by three governments—launched a concerted Iranian effort to destabilize and "destroy" neighboring Gulf governments through a wave of violent acts.

US and allied assets throughout the region were targeted for covert surveillance, radicals were brought to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley for training in techniques of bombing and assassination, and cells of sympathizers were formed in a half-dozen Middle East nations on the model of the radical Hezbollah group in Lebanon, these officials allege.

Following the dictums of the speech, according to this view, Iran's agents unleashed violence in Bahrain in December 1994, hatched subversive plots in Egypt, and eventually undertook the successful truck bombing of a US military barracks at Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in June 1996, killing 19 US airmen.

It is a seamless and grim picture of officially sanctioned Iranian terrorism, and it still hangs like a dark cloud over discussion about rapprochement between Iran, neighboring Gulf states, and the United States. Some Gulf officials today ask, how can they conduct friendly relations with a country whose

top leader ordered his ambassadors to contribute to a secret war on its neighbors?

A year ago, however, no one was even raising such a question. Then, many US and Middle East officials expected that Washington's probe of the bombing would lead inexorably toward almost certain confrontation with Tehran, at a minimum provoking additional diplomatic sanctions and at most a US military

not so much on settling any old scores over what Iranian agents may have already done, but on ensuring that no Iranian-inspired terrorism occurs in the future.

One key intervening factor was the election of a moderate president in May of a moderate cleric, Mohammad Khatami, who some US intelligence officials and Middle East diplomats have concluded is genuinely open to warmer relations with the West and likely to make a less provocative stance toward US allies in the Persian Gulf. Among his reforms so far is the appointment of a new minister of intelligence, who could exercise some control over the group that Ayatollah Khamenei allegedly said in 1993 was to spearhead the revolutionary campaign outside Iran's borders.

"It's not the same as it was four months ago, when Iran was seen as the enemy," one well-placed Middle East official said. "The election was a turning point. It toned down the desire (of the Saudis) to sock it to Iran. It's not that they are no longer seen as a threat. But there is a recognition of a genuine conflict taking place between the old guard and a more moderate faction, and it seems Khatami is prevailing."

Another factor is what US law enforcement officials describe as an extended lull in Washington's closely held probe of the Khobar Towers bombing, which the officials ascribed to a lack of solid leads and a continuing Saudi reluctance to provide direct US access to those implicated for involvement in the blast or share key supporting evidence.

When families of American troops injured or slain went to Quantico, Va., in early December for a briefing on the inquiry arranged by the administration, FBI Director Louis J. Freeh had little optimism to convey. "We did not report to them the progress. We did not report to them the imminence of an indictment or charges. We said we were frustrated with certain aspects of the case," he told reporters later.

There is abundant circumstantial evidence linking Iranian officials and sympathizers to the bombing, several officials said. Hani Abdel Rahim Sayegh, who was alleged by Canadian authorities in court documents to have been the driver of a surveillance car in the bombing, privately told FBI officials in early 1996 that a senior Iranian official had recruited him in 1995 to help track American military operations in Saudi Arabia in preparation for possible terrorist attacks.

But Sayegh has refused since last June to elaborate on his remarks, and the US probe has ground to a standstill. "It's very likely that we will never get to the bottom of this," a senior intelligence official said last week, explaining that he meant Washington will likely never turn up "smoking gun" evidence against the Iranian government that would warrant a stiff US response.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

More Algeria slaughter causes diplomatic flurry

By Roula Khalaf

AN ARMED gang killed more than 100 people last Sunday night in a village near Algiers, as diplomats tried to find ways to enlist international help to end the six-year conflict.

A bomb blast in a cafe in Sidi Hamed, a village 20 miles south of the capital, started off another night of slaughter in which dozens of civilians were killed.

Since the start of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan two weeks ago, more than 1,000 civilians have been killed in massacres, according to local newspapers.

Security forces confirmed the latest killings, and cited a death toll of 103 and 70 wounded, the highest ever officially recognized for a massacre. Other sources in Algiers said the death toll may have been much higher.

Security forces said more people would have died without their intervention and the resistance of self-defence militias, who were armed by the government.

The latest massacre happened as Algiers was waiting for two envoys, one from the

Arab League, the other from Canada. International concern over the wave of massacres has forced western and Arab governments to initiate diplomatic action. The European Union is also preparing to send a delegation to Algiers, to report back before the EU foreign ministers' meeting on 26 January.

The Algerian government, which says Islamist extremists are responsible for the massacres, is opposed to foreign intervention in the conflict.

It told the EU the mission was welcome as long as it aimed to discuss co-operation against terrorism. Western governments are treading carefully and couching their diplomatic initiatives in terms of an attempt to increase their understanding of the conflict, extend help to the victims, and initiate a long-term dialogue with the authorities on ways that Europe could help bring an end to the killings.

The Arab League has emphasised that it was sending an envoy to Algiers to express its solidarity with the people and the government.

A Canadian official said his government's envoy would put ideas to the Algerian authorities, including encouraging

them to submit to greater transparency in reporting the conflict.

Algiers has kept a tight lid on security information, adding confusion to a little understood conflict. Human rights organisations have raised concerns that Islamists may not be the only ones responsible for the killings allegations denied by the government.

However, none of the diplomatic missions is seeking to act as commissions of inquiry into the massacres, as urged by human rights organisations. The government rejects calls for such investigations, saying they put in doubt the identity of the killers.

Abdelkader Hachani, a senior leader of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the party stripped of an electoral victory in 1992, urged western governments to persuade Algiers to speak to the banned party.

Mr Hachani proposed that western countries work towards a conference of national reconciliation among Algerians, to be followed by a commission of inquiry into the killings.

Financial Times Syndication



When will it end? Two women wait their relatives in the latest massacre in Sidi Hamed

Sanctions killed 134,000 Iraqi children in 1997

A REPORT by the Iraqi Health Ministry released 2 January revealed that 134,000 Iraqi children died as a result of the unjust sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United States through the United Nations.

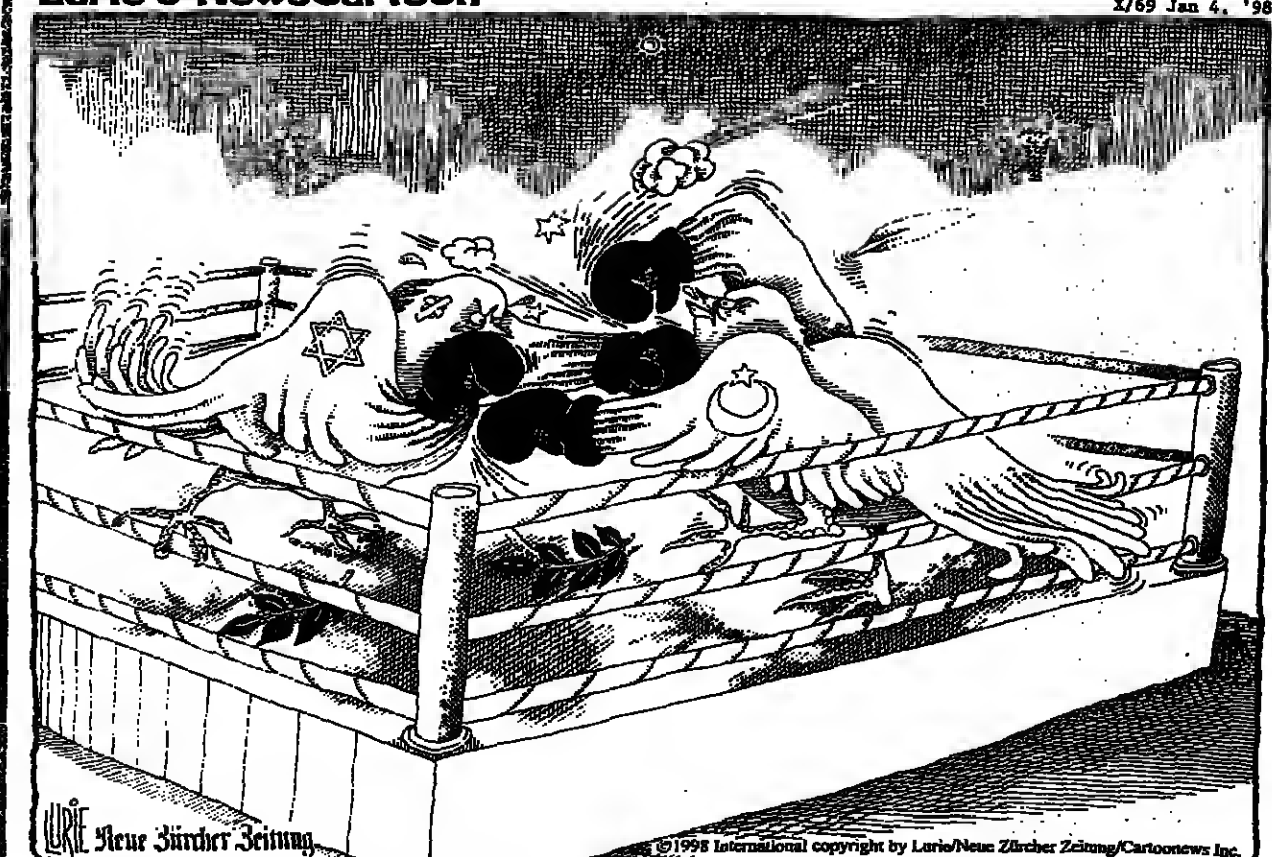
Those children died from malnutrition, tuberculosis, diabetes, liver infection and other fatal infectious illnesses. The report said that 37 percent of Iraqi children are facing permanent weakness because of lack of nutrition.

Death average among infants is very high, 92.7 per 1,000 and among pregnant women 117 per 100,000. Humanitarian assistance from international organizations to Iraqi children and hospitals is inadequate as it does not meet the mini-

mum standard. Since the sanctions went into effect against Iraq in 1991 about 729,000 children died. UNICEF has reported that 750,000 children do not have sufficient food to meet the minimum requirement to sustain an acceptable standard of living.

American and British warships, in the Arabian Gulf, are deliberately hindering the delivery of foodstuffs and medicine on time. A Captain of a ship had reported that he was harassed by the Americans and was ordered to stop and open the containers that carried rice and sugar for inspection under heavy rain. That action caused large amounts of the merchandise to be spoiled.

Lurie's NewsCartoon



Middle East Peace Doves

كشافة السلام

Secret CIA-KGB links eased Cold War tensions

By James Risen

MOSCOW—Leaves skittered across the quiet streets of East Berlin's Karlshorst district on the autumn day that would be East Germany's last, and anticipation filled the air. It was 2 October, 1990, a day before Germany was to become united for the first time since the end of World War II, and Karlshorst, like all of Germany, was preparing for the party of the century.

Deep inside one nondescript Karlshorst house, however, the Cold War was still very much under way. The barons of the CIA and the KGB—the spy agencies of West and East—were secretly gathering for a high-level conference.

Milton A. Bearden, chief of the CIA's Soviet Division, and Hugh E. "Ted" Price, its chief of counterintelligence, had been summoned to a KGB safe house by their Soviet counterparts: Rem Krassilnikov and Leonid Nikitenko, the chiefs of KGB counterintelligence. A key topic, from the Soviet point of view: Why were so many KGB agents defecting to the West? Although their meeting was extraordinary, the means by which it had been arranged had quickly become standard operating procedure for the superpower spy agencies. The KGB had brought the CIA officials there by activating what the Soviets called "the Gavrilo channel," a secret line of communications between the two spy services that has never before been publicly disclosed.

At the heart of the Gavrilo channel, named after an 18th century Russian poet, was a top-secret telephone hotline established earlier in the Cold War to arrange back-channel meetings on short notice. The hotline connected KGB headquarters in Moscow via a secure telephone link to a special phone in Bearden's office at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va.

The Gavrilo channel allowed the CIA and KGB to address common problems

while politely ignoring the espionage war their services were engaged in outside their meeting room.

"It was a concept developed when people on both sides started to say, 'Let's communicate, let's talk about security threats, terrorist things like that,'" Bearden said.

Trust went only so far; neither side ever allowed its officers to go to the conference alone, fearful that Gavrilo might turn into an officially sanctioned means for spies to meet their handlers. Instead, the American and Russian teams came together tentatively, one step at a time, like rival Mafia capos, keeping one hand in their pockets and one eye on the exit door.

Over time, however, Gavrilo quietly helped reduce Cold War tensions, just as the more famous presidential hotline between the Kremlin and White House had done years earlier. And to the end, Gavrilo paved the way for the relationship that developed between the CIA and the SVR, the successor to the KGB's foreign intelligence arm, after the Cold War.

In fact, through Gavrilo, KGB and CIA officials found common ground for the first time on narcotics trafficking, terrorism and, most awkwardly, the resettlement of defectors.

"There were contacts, through a confidential but official channel, between our organizations," said Leonid V. Shebarshin, who at the time was head of the KGB's First Chief Directorate, which handled foreign intelligence. "Occasionally, information was exchanged at the highest levels, especially on possible terrorist threats, and this channel was quite effective."

The CIA took the first tentative steps to open a channel in the early 1980s. At a time when President Reagan was calling the Soviet Union the "evil empire," senior CIA and KGB officials sat down for their initial off-the-record sessions in neutral cities such as Vienna, according

to several CIA officials.

Burton Gerber, then chief of the Soviet Division, along with CIA counterintelligence chief David Blee, were the first CIA officials involved. So at odds with Reagan's public line were the initial Gavrilo meetings that only a handful of senior CIA officials were told that the channel had been established.

One of the first major requests the Americans made through the Gavrilo channel was for the KGB's help in determining the fate of William Buckley, the CIA's station chief in Beirut, Lebanon, who had been kidnapped by Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad terrorists in 1984.

But the Buckley case was particularly awkward for Moscow since the KGB itself had planned to kidnap another CIA officer in Beirut in the late 1970s, using local Islamic radicals to do the dirty work. The KGB-backed kidnapping plot had been canceled at the last minute by KGB chief Yuri V. Andropov, who had feared it would lead to a war of attrition with the CIA.

The KGB was not involved in Buckley's kidnapping. Nonetheless, former KGB Major Gen. Oleg Kalugin, who thought up the KGB's aborted kidnapping scheme in the late 1970s, now says he is convinced that the transcripts from Islamic Jihad's brutal interrogations of Buckley were sold to Soviet intelligence. If true, that would mean that the KGB knew far more about Buckley than it was willing to tell the CIA. Buckley eventually died in captivity.

The KGB did not provide much help to the CIA in the Buckley case, and the Gavrilo channel seems to have languished for several years as a result. "We wanted to talk to them about Buckley, but nothing much came of it for a long time," Bearden recalled.

The Soviets renewed attempts to establish a back channel in 1988 when Krassilnikov, then chief of the American depart-

ment of the KGB's Second Chief Directorate, which handled counterintelligence, raised the matter with Jack Downing, the CIA's Moscow station chief.

Krassilnikov recalls that Downing, now the chief of the CIA's clandestine espionage service, was wary and didn't respond. "I think he was afraid of me," Krassilnikov said. "I think he thought it was a trick."

It wasn't until the following year, 1989, as communism retreated across Eastern Europe, that the Gavrilo channel was reopened. The second round of Gavrilo meetings began with a session at the Soviet Embassy in Helsinki, Finland.

As the Soviet Union itself entered its death throes, the Gavrilo channel was activated more frequently. Cooperation deepened as the KGB began a desperate scramble for survival.

Most notably, the CIA sought the KGB's cooperation as the United States built an international coalition to oppose Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The KGB, meanwhile, asked for the CIA's help to determine the fate of a Soviet diplomat who had disappeared without a trace in India.

Increasingly, the Gavrilo meetings came to be dominated by Moscow's desperate search for answers as the trickle of KGB defectors to the West turned into a flood at the end of the Cold War.

To be sure, the KGB still had Aldrich H. Ames, its mole inside the CIA, to provide plenty of information about defectors who had been brought to the United States by the CIA. Information the KGB obtained through the Gavrilo channel may have helped the KGB make certain that Ames was telling them the truth.

And so a polite and carefully choreographed dance would be conducted at the Gavrilo meetings. KGB officials would kindly ask their CIA counterparts if they had any idea what had become of a KGB officer who had suddenly vanished, and



Shebarshin

the CIA officials would respond in equally diplomatic terms.

"We would always say that the officer in question is well, has freedom of movement, and is in another country—short-hand for saying we had him and he was living in the United States."

In the end, it was the mystery surrounding Nikitenko's own death that finally seemed to solidify the trust between the CIA and KGB officials involved in the Gavrilo channel. The Russian spy died suddenly in 1991 while traveling in Brazil, and the KGB, uncertain whether he had been murdered, asked the CIA to help investigate. Through its contacts in the Brazilian government, the CIA determined that Nikitenko had simply died of a heart attack.

"When there was some suspicion of foul

play, we would get in touch with the CIA, and we would clarify matters," recalled former KGB intelligence chief Shebarshin. "Our man Nikitenko went abroad for a short time and died, and we had to check to see if it was a medical case or foul play. We received information from our American colleagues that they did not suspect foul play, and also they shut off any possible suspicion that they were somehow involved in the matter. I believed the information and I was grateful."

The Gavrilo channel came out of the closet after the failed 1991 Soviet coup by Communist hard-liners and emerged as the basis for a new intelligence liaison between Washington and Moscow. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Bitten!

Underground zoo deals in snake venom

By Justin Blum

IN THE basement of his Prince William County home in the state of Virginia, Kevin Lee Stotler was trying to milk his Indian cobra by maneuvering its razor-sharp fangs through a rubber sheath on a plastic vial—the way he had done hundreds of times before. This time the snake wriggled loose. The cobra sunk a fang into Stotler's pinkie, injecting lethal venom. The poison pulsed through Kevin Stotler's veins. Soon, he had no feeling in his arm or legs. He could hardly breathe.

At the hospital, a nurse had to hold open his paralyzed eyelids so he could sign paperwork allowing authorities to take away his 10 venomous snakes. He was on a gurney wondering if he would live, unsure if doctors would find the needed antivenom. The recent cobra attack was the sixth time Stotler had been bitten by a venomous snake.

He was hospitalized two years ago for a life-threatening bite, and on the other occasions weathered the symptoms at home. But despite the constant danger posed by his hobby, and a county ordinance forbidding it, Stotler has repeatedly returned to his basement to milk and breed deadly snakes. Stotler, a 29-year-old computer maintenance worker, is one of hundreds of breeders across the United States who fuel an international market that specialists describe as an "underground zoo," where rare poisonous snakes are bought and sold as pets and mates for other snakes.

Milking snakes for venom is a more-risky endeavor pursued by fewer people, specialists said. In 1996, there were 24 reports to poison centers of moderate to life-threatening bites from exotic, venomous snakes.

Many bites reported nationally involve snakes kept in homes. In 1992, an Emmitsburg man died after he was bitten by a pet Indian cobra. How Stotler got involved in this business helps illustrate what leads breeders and milkers to ply their trade even after suffering life-threatening bites. Stotler said his case should also serve as a warning. "This is a horror story," said Stotler, a lanky man with a goatee and a cobra tattooed on his left arm. "If someone had come to me years ago and told me their horror story, I might have gotten out of it. I might have listened to reason."

Stotler did it partially for money—a factor that often drives people to get into the exotic-snake business, according to animal-control officials. Poisonous snakes can sell for hundreds of dollars apiece, depending on the breed. And milking the venom can net \$45 to



Kevin Lee Stotler, 29, holds a Cuban boa, the only snake he owns after being hospitalized with a cobra bite. Photo by Nancy Andrews

\$6,000 per gram. Venom is used by researchers to study its potential medicinal uses, and to make antivenom.

What Stotler and some others in the field share is a deep fascination with snakes and a desire to control an animal that sends most people fleeing in terror. "The adrenaline situation of me catching something that potentially could kill me was an aspect of gratification and satisfaction," Stotler said. "It was probably the most challenging thing in my life I'd ever done."

Stotler said he became obsessed with collecting and studying snakes at age 8. His fascination escalated as a teenager, when he built cages and got a rattlesnake and an anaconda.

Stotler read every snake book he could find, including a biography of Florida snake enthusiast William Haast, who is an idol to Stotler and many other snake milkers. Haast, 86, runs a serpentarium and said he has collected venom thousands of times and has injected himself with venomous snakes. In addition, Haast has extolled the medical values of venom and said he has injected himself with small doses to try to protect against snakebites.

Stotler has called Haast, and sent him a photo of a king cobra—one of the most deadly snakes—Stotler had kept in his basement for several weeks. "The reason Haast is a hero is he free-handed these snakes in a macho way, and they like to emulate him," said Clyde Peeling, a snake specialist who owns a zoo in Allentown, Pa. "Haast, throughout his life, believed that venoms were going to be useful

for treating a variety of things. A lot of people believe that and try to copy him."

After high school, Stotler's involvement with snakes escalated. He acquired cobras and outfitted the basement of his mother's home with cages and a heater. Stotler said his goal was venom research. Even though he had no college education or formal training, Stotler conducted what he called experiments, breeding rats and injecting them with different venoms; he'd sometimes cut the rats beforehand to see if the venom would affect their recovery. "Every now and then I would get rats with cancer and find out if the venom neutralized the cancer," Stotler said. "It was more of a crusade. I thought there was a possibility it could help."

He also acquired tarantulas and black widow spiders. He tried to milk the spiders but concluded they were too small. Stotler started getting bitten, which snake specialists said is inevitable for anyone who milks regularly. He kept careful records of each bite and how much venom he thought was injected. But Stotler didn't go to the hospital most times. He was worried that his snake collection would be seized, a concern authorities said often keeps underground breeders from seeking medical attention.

Instead, Stotler consulted a book of case studies to determine how serious his symptoms were. Doctors said Stotler could have died before realizing he had serious symptoms. "I think it's like playing Russian roulette," said Barry Gold, a Baltimore poison consultant

who has helped treat more than 300 snakebites and has advised Stotler's doctors.

In 1995, a Chinese cobra wrapped itself around Stotler's right hand and bit his left hand twice. Stotler ultimately called 911 and said he was suffering from heatstroke to try to conceal his snake collection. The doctor thought Stotler needed his appendix removed and was ready to begin surgery when Stotler finally told the truth. After that bite, Stotler said, he moved to Charlottesville where he said he used the University of Virginia's libraries to read about toxicology.

Animal-control officials took his poisonous snakes, and he promised to breed only non-poisonous varieties, which he continues to do today. Stotler returned to Triangle earlier this year because his mother was suffering from cancer, he said. In November, Stotler said, he obtained snakes to milk for their venom to help pay bills, which mounted after his mother's death. "I was in trouble and needed money fast," Stotler said.

Stotler said researchers in the "experimental medical field" buy venom from milkers who work in their homes, sometimes in violation of local laws. He declined to say who bought his venom, or how much he charged. But Stotler said he specialized in crossbred snakes, which bring in more money.

When Stotler was bitten on Dec. 3, he thought he was going to die. He was put on a respirator as the venom played havoc with his muscles. After an all-night effort, Gold turned up eight vials of antivenom from New York and 10 more from Baltimore. By the next day, the antivenom had worked. Stotler, who is uninsured, was released from the hospital after racking up \$11,000 in bills, not including doctors' fees or the cost of the antivenom and its transportation. He's also been issued a \$500 citation for violating the county code on poisonous-snake possession.

Stotler's sister, Cynthia, said, "He's going to have another hobby now. Maybe stamp collecting. Something safe!" Stotler said he's planning to make a video to dissuade others from raising venomous snakes. Asked about his plans, Stotler said he's going to stick to non-venomous snakes. But then he paused. "If I ever did get back into it," Stotler said, "it would be with the king cobras. I am addicted when it comes to kings." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Mixing the right soup for survival

By Daniel Green

SOME US embryologists scientists who study how a single fertilized egg develops are proposing an alternative theory: that genes are like building regulations, and it is growing cells that are the cutting edge of evolution.

The idea has arisen out of some weird observations. A chimpanzee's genes are 99 percent the same as human genes. Even one-third of yeast genes have counterparts in humans.

The curiosity is not how alike humans, chimpanzees and yeast must somehow be, but how different they actually are when they have so many genes in common.

Another observation is that bacteria have evolved to live on just about any energy source. Some live in darkness, others in volcanic vents, and yet others on your teeth. Other living creatures are differently diverse. They give electric shocks, fly, or write symphonies, but their food is more or less the same.

The two are linked because eating is about the biochemistry of energy. Fruit flies, which have many genes in common with humans, are genetically and biochemically similar to people. There are even biotechnology companies studying fruit fly genetics to help understand human biochemistry.

What may have happened in prehistory is that bacteria came first and learned how to evolve biochemically. Two billion or so years later came other living creatures, which evolved through changing shape and behaviour.

John Gerhart of UC Berkeley and Marc Kirschner at Harvard Medical School have just published their summary of modern embryology*. It proposes that the vehicles for much of this second type of evolution are cells, and they are especially interested in one type called neural crest cells.

These are cells that, during embryo development, can turn into any of an enormous variety of more specialised ones. They include bones, bird beaks, human vocal cords, sense organs and blood vessels many of the distinguishing features of species.

The job of neural crest cells is to explore. Blood vessels grow in patterns that are not determined by genes, and are often different in identical twins. Elk antlers, hummingbird beaks and elephants' trunks are all derived from neural crest cells.

These cells have been studied for decades, but as Gerhart and Kirschner surveyed embryologists' work, increasingly informed by discoveries in more basic science such as molecular biology, it seemed that evolution itself depended on such cells.

Is that enough to consider displacing genes from the centre of the evolutionary universe? No. But it does begin to suggest genes should share the centre stage with cells.

To see how the two work together, let us take another look at how genes work in the light of molecular and cell biology.

Genes cause cells to make proteins such as insulin* and haemoglobin. These proteins make the body work.

But genes do not make proteins all the time: they are switched on and off by what is happening around them. Insulin is made only when the conditions are right, perhaps when sugar is eaten. Every cell in your body has the same genes, but every gene has a set of switches which make sure, for example, that your skin cells do not start making insulin.

The switches work in response to the environment. But their environment is the cell. So genes and cells affect each other.

Take deer antlers: Genes create a biochemical soup in which cells grow. During the animal's development these cells "explore" new shapes. The size and shape of the antlers vary how the elk reacts to its environment: it may find it hard to eat leaves growing high, or easier to challenge rivals for the low-growing leaves. Either way, the food the animal eats affects where and when genes get switched on that is, they affect the biochemical soup. If the combination of genes and cells works well, the animal is successful and the soup's recipe is passed on to the next generation.

What the embryologists are saying does not contradict traditional Darwinian evolution. Richard Dawkins, for example, has said the ability to evolve better is itself the result of evolution. Cells that evolve quickly would be one way of doing this.

This also implies there can be different kinds of evolution, as in bacteria and their biochemical diversity, and animals and their shape diversity. Gerhart and Kirschner tentatively suggest there can be psychological evolution, too.

Other scientists have suggested prehistoric man was what we would now describe as schizophrenic, given the evidence of remorse-free killings prompted by divine "voices", for example, described by Homer.

Even this does not exclude genes, whose functioning is affected by the outside world. Schizophrenia appears to be related to a protein in the brain called dopamine. This is, of course, made by a gene.

So genes tell cells what they can and cannot do. In return, cells call on the resources of genes to enable them to act. Perhaps the best analogy is that we are driving a car. The genes are the gears and engine while the cells are the bodywork and wheels. Lots of different car designs are possible.

* Cells, Embryos and Evolution, by John Gerhart and Marc Kirschner. Blackwell Science 1997, \$69.95. ■

Financial Times Syndication



● Her Majesty Queen Noor has opened, Wednesday the Zaha Gardens and the Zaha Cultural Center which is established by the Amman Greater Municipality after it received a generous donation of JD 350,000 from Zaha Jordanah. The complex, which is in Khaldia, is basically a recreational ground that includes a children's library, computer section, a film hall and tennis courts. The idea is to beef up the services provided by GAM for the children of Amman.



Who is looking at you babe!

Films on the silver screen

AMMAN (Star)—Have you ever wanted to be in lush surroundings or experience something exciting, mesmerizing or even captivating? Well, you can experience all of these things at the Philadelphia.

The 550-seat cinema is arguably one of the biggest in the country.

A cinema is about comfort, when people go to the flicks they want to experience a good outing. At the Philadelphia, they have a reputation for providing just that. Established in 1983, the cinema has from the start sought to provide the best service. In 1986, Philadelphia expanded yet again with a new but smaller cinema of 150 seats in the same complex.

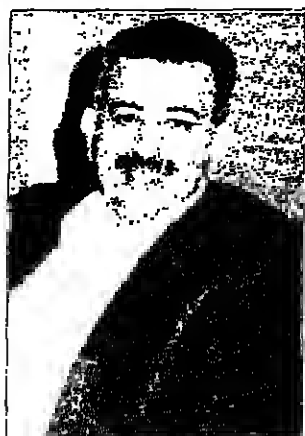
When sitting down, you feel that you are sinking in a slumber. The seats are so comfortable, that you don't ever want to leave. In the case of Philadelphia 1, what is interesting also is that despite the huge auditorium, patrons can take their seats anywhere—the middle, left side, right side—and still get the maximum effect. This is basically for two reasons: the big screen and the sound system.

"We have installed the latest revolution in sound systems anywhere in the cinema industry which is the digital DTS," says Samir Seikaly, co-owner of Philadelphia.

"This not only makes the spectator see the film but live it because of the surroundings—the screen and the sound."



Mr. Samir Seikaly



Mr. Ihsan Seikaly

den voices that come from all sides of the auditorium give him a special atmosphere.

This distinct ambience is helped by the fact that Mr. Seikaly comes from a family that went into the cinema business back in the 1930s and 1940s in Palestine.

"We are pioneers in the cinema line, we were among the first people that have indulged in theaters, cinemas and the film business," he adds.

Mr. Seikaly draws on this rich background for understanding the movie scene, what to order, what not, what people will like, what are the different tastes and attitudes.

And in this respect, Philadelphia was able to continue to expand.

"We have been able to show the biggest films," The latest

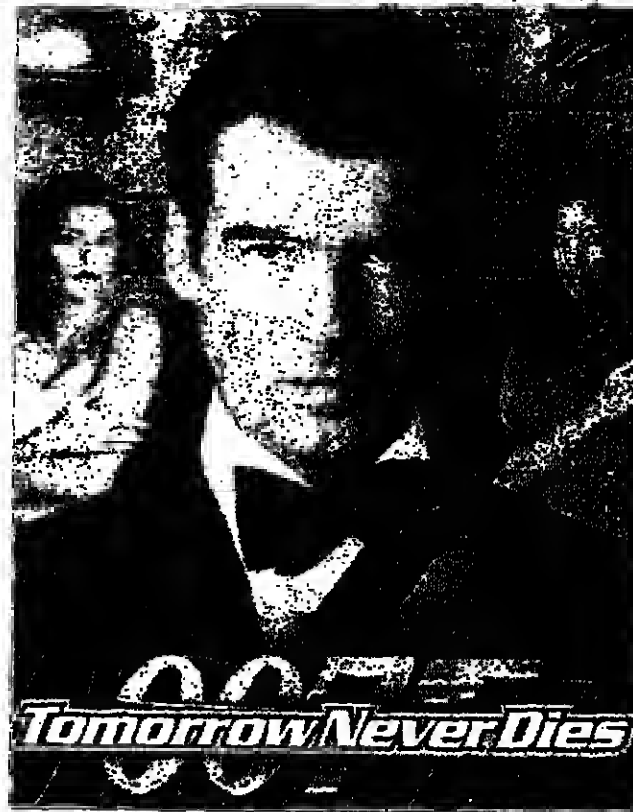
cinema companies in America: Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Universal, United Artists, Paramount, and Dreamworks." Mr. Samir Seikaly adds, (Dreamworks) is a new company that was formed by Steven Spielberg with a capital of \$12 billion.

Spielberg is well known for producing and directing the top films for the last 10 to 15 years. He started with ET and ended with Jurassic Park. As long as he deals with UIP all his films should be shown here at the Philadelphia, Mr. Samir Seikaly points out.

With such connections the Philadelphia Cinema has over the years built a competitive edge over all other cinemas.

"We release the films through a special arrangement, we import the films and there is a special agreement with the company regarding every film," Mr. Samir Seikaly adds.

He says that changes have to be made in the cinema industry in Jordan if it is to revitalize itself. Mr. Seikaly regards copyright as very important which should be enforced. "This is the main issue we have been suffering from since the 1950s when the cinema move-



ment started in Jordan, "you would find everybody, all the ministers, all the big personalities who would go on regular basis."

Today it's different. Most people that frequent cinemas are the younger generation. Indeed cinema is seen by the older generation as an outlet for the young. Mr. Seikaly says, something which he wouldn't necessarily agree with.

But cinema should be something for all to enjoy and not geared just to one section of society. This is the fact all over the world, and should be so in this country."

Kevin Costner hits to premiere on Super movies

ALL AMERICAN actor, Kevin Costner, probably most famous for his Academy Award winning direction of Dances With Wolves, featuring in four box office hits airing on Super Movies this month. His versatility is on display, from the romantic bodyguard to the hardened criminal, Costner does it all.

Costner's second starring appearance was in the Super Movies Western premier of Wyatt Earp that was shown on 9 January, where he co-starred with Dennis Quaid and Gene Hackman. Costner starred as Wyatt Earp, who grows from an innocent and adventures young man, to one of the most feared gunslingers and respected peacekeepers of the Wild West. At the infamous gun battle at the O.K. Corral, Wyatt Earp the sheriff becomes Wyatt Earp the avenger, changing his life forever.

A Perfect World showing 16 January at 8:00 pm GMT, sees Costner playing opposite Clint Eastwood and Laura Dern. In this moving drama, Costner stars as Butch Haynes, a hardened criminal who manages to escape from custody. Haynes kidnaps a seven year old boy, taking him hostage.

The criminal and boy develop a unique friendship, experiencing pleasures missed from their childhood. Eastwood stars as Texas Ranger Red Garnett who is in hot pursuit of Haynes and the little boy. This movie deals with the complexities of human relationships and fate in a most imperfect world.

To conclude Costner's starring performance on Super Movies this month is Costner star role in Oliver Stone's political movie JFK on Monday 19 January at 8 pm GMT. Costner stars as the District Attorney Jim Garrison, investigating the brutal shooting of one of America's most famous Presidents, John F. Kennedy. Tommy Lee Jones plays conspirator Clay Shaw and Gary Oldman plays the first suspect in murder.

Lee Harvey Oswald, who just a few days after being arrested, was shot down in cold blood. Stone studiously researched the facts surrounding President Kennedy and his assassination, combining truth and conjecture to bring viewers an alternative theory to the Warren Commission conclusion, that a lone assassin killed the President, earning Stone a Golden globe for Best Director.



Soothing sound of Moullieen



● The Moullieen Band, a traditional folklore group that has come all the way from the heart of Damascus continues with its nightly performances at the Villa Cafe for the rest of Ramadan. This is the second week. Already people have been flocking to the Cafe in Um Uthaina to watch the wonders of the group dance and play traditional folklore music combined with the enigmatic sound of Amir. You can sit, watch and enjoy while eating your Katojef or anything else you may fancy from the menu.

New business center for frequent flyers

BRITISH AIRWAYS formally opened a new business center for frequent flyers at London Heathrow Airport this week offering the latest in computer technology.

Sponsored by Hewlett-Packard Ltd and managed by desktop services company Computecenter, the new center at the club Europe lounge in Terminal 1, enable British Airways Executive Silver and Gold members and club Europe business passengers to maximize time while waiting for flights.

It is equipped with personal computers and modem connections for laptop computers, enabling users to send emails and business documents and access available business information via the Internet. The facilities also include faxes, phones, and printers, photocopying and scanning facilities.

Martin George, British Airways director of marketing said: "This center will offer a real benefit to increasingly busy business customers whose time is precious. The ability to

access information networks using the most advanced computer technology can make all the difference in successful business."

The center has been on trial since November and has already voted a hit with passengers, some of whom check in early for flights in order to use it.

John Golding, chairman and managing director of Hewlett-Packard Ltd said: "We are delighted to be working with British Airways to offer a travelling experience of the future. HP offers a wealth of market-leading technology solutions and British Airways offers passengers the best choice and service."

Mike Norris, chief executive of Computecenter said: "The initial trial have shown that accessing the internet and sending emails are the most popular services."

Customers are also delighted that the service is free and supported by the expertise of Computecenter staff. ■

Enjoy the latest in design

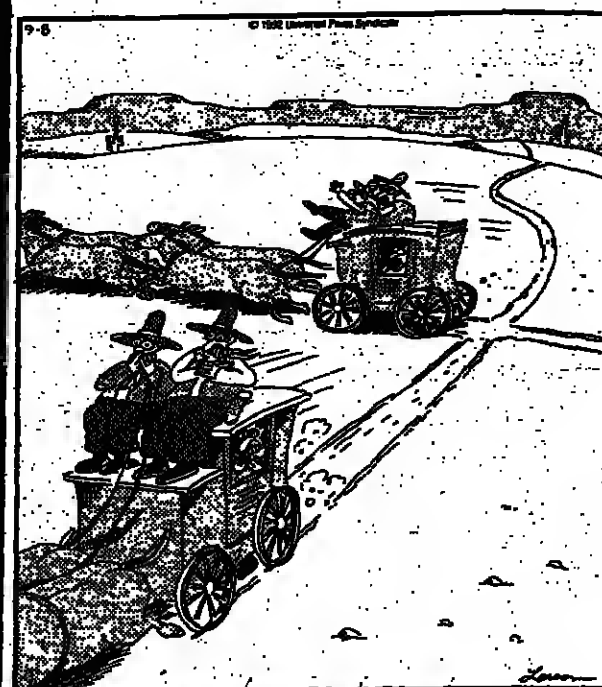
THE LONDON Fashion Week is in take place between 21-26 February. Sponsored by Vidal Sassoon, this year, it is taking place at the Natural History Museum in London. The Week includes the London Designers Exhibition where 140 exhibitors will show their top ready to wear designs and accessories for the Autumn/Winter '98 seasons. Also there will be catwalk shows throughout the Week, displaying the latest Autumn/Winter '98 fashion collections of over 50 designers. ■



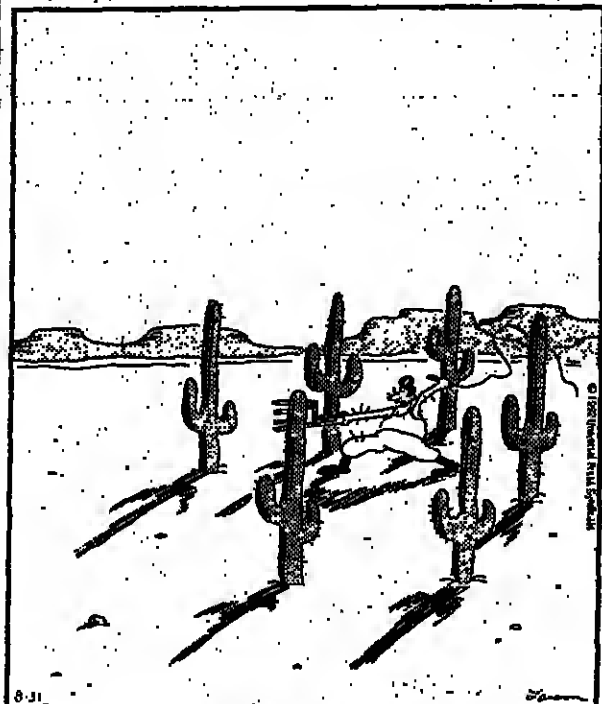
Sponsored by VIDAL SASSOON 21-26 February 1998

THE FAR SIDE

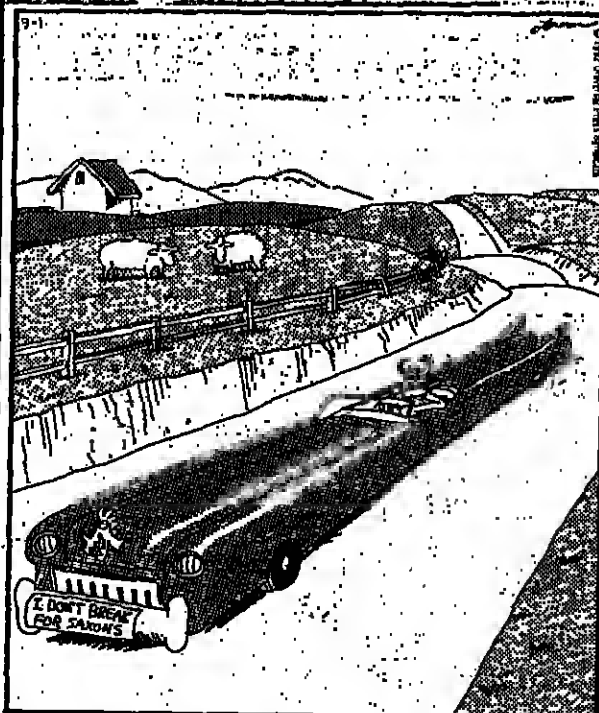
BY GARY BARSON



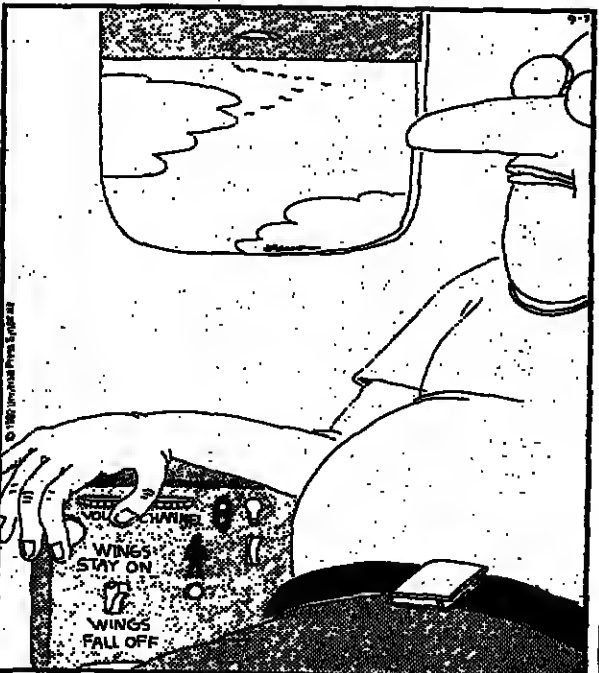
Near misses of the Old West



Andre Lafleur: cactus tamer (later killed in central Arizona)



The Viking longcar was once the scourge of European roadways.



Fumbling for his recline button, Ted unwittingly instigates a disaster.

SLAPSTIX

Winning is like shaving, you do it every day, or you look like a bum.

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The Star's GUIDE

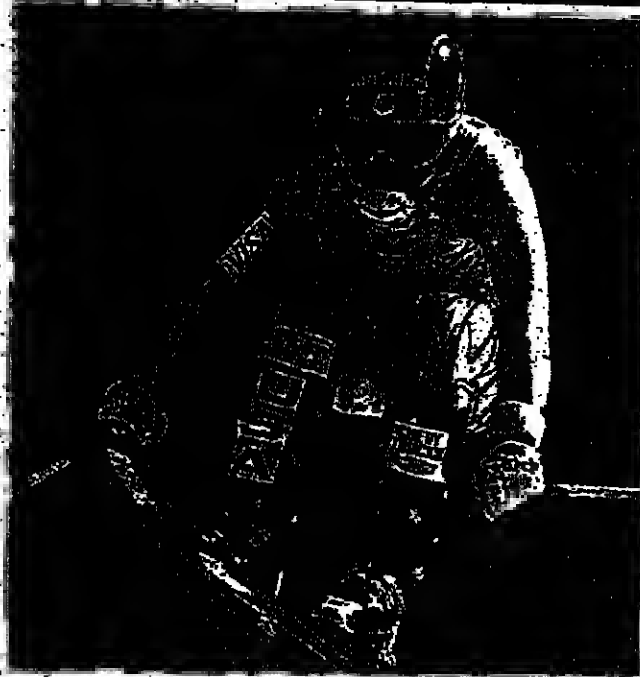
Programs on JTV
from 17 — 23 January

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY
2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Twinkle
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—NBA Games
6:00—Neighbors
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—You Bet Your Life
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Perspective
8:00—Cinema Cinema
8:30—Prison
9:10—Time Trax
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Feature Film: *No Greater Love*
12:00—Country Music
12:30—Islam in a Changing World

SUNDAY
2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—The Pink Panther
2:15—Johnny Quest
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Energy Express
5:30—Tarzan
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—America's Funniest People
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Black Hat Chef
8:00—Dadd's Army
8:30—Killing for a Living
9:10—Renegade
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—North & South
11:10—Jewel in the Crown
12:00—Islam in a Changing World

MONDAY
2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Hammerman
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Riding High



Gillette Sports, Tuesday at 6:00 pm

5:30—Animal Show
6:00—Neighbors
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Hope & Gloria
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—The Health Show
8:00—Over A Cup of Tea
8:30—Country Music
9:10—Highlander
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Emergency Room (E.R.)
11:15—Cosmos (Doc)
12:00—Islam in a Changing World

TUESDAY
2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Sandoz
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Skipper
5:30—Square One TV

WEDNESDAY
2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Johnny Quest
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Border Town
5:30—The Finder
6:00—Neighbors



Amman cinemas

- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): Fools Rush In
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): Beverly Hills Ninja
- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): The Peacemaker
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): Twister
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): Scream / Scream
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): Conspiracy Theory
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): Mr. Bean

6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Step by Step
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Nature of Thing
8:00—The Upper Hand
8:30—Challenges
9:10—Kung Fu
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—A Woman of Independent Means
11:15—Country Music
12:00—Islam in a Changing World

THURSDAY
2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—My Little Fairy Tale
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—NBA Games
6:00—Prince & The Pauper
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Big Brother Jake
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Black Hat Chef
8:00—Over A Cup of Tea
8:30—Lois & Clark
9:10—The Oprah Winfrey
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Feature Film: *The Men in the Corner*
12:00—Music Show
12:30—Islam in a Changing World

FRIDAY
2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Rurpin
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Wishbone
5:30—Metro Café
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Small Talk
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Life on the Internet
8:00—Friends

8:30—Brisco County
9:10—Knife to the Heart
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Streets of Larido
11:30—Feature Film
1:00—Islam in a Changing World

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS SAMEDI
2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Cajou
4:00—Magazine
L'aufr de Colomb

DIMANCHE
2:30—Micro Kids
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Magazine
Faut pas rêver
4:00—Le Tour de France

LUNDI
2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Thalassé
4:00—Magazine scientifique
Cinq sur cinq

MARDI
2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Savoir plus santé
4:00—E = M6

MERCREDI
2:30—Micro kids
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Ushuaia
4:00—Goûtez-moi ça

JEUDI
2:30—Envoyé Spécial
4:00—Atomes crochus

VENREDI
2:30—Les compagnons de la loco
4:00—Magazine
Allô la terre

Programs are subject to change by JTV

Fashion



Marilhe & François Girbaud

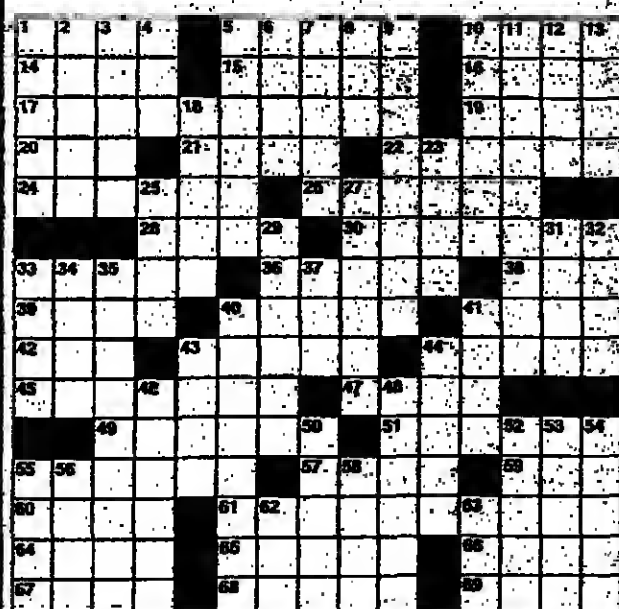


Carolina Herrera



Baigley Mishka

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- ACROSS**
1. These
 5. Continued without pause
 10. Amnesia sci-fi film
 14. Dism
 15. Eat away
 16. Regulation
 17. Christmas confection
 19. Ma Bolla code
 20. Direct
 21. Obedient
 22. West sighting
 24. Inn
 25. Dull him
 26. Building
 27. Wings
 30. Used graffiti
 33. Made a bow
 35. Sign of
 36. One of a
 38. Latin trio
 39. Predict the
- DOWN**
2. Cuff
 3. Blue dye
 4. Surburban
 6. Scope
 7. Employ
 8. Green alone
 9. Respectful
 11. Theatrical
 12. Kind of sandwich
 13. Blind as
 18. To lose one winner
 19. One-celled plant
 23. Skippy
 28. Architecture
 29. Best board
 31. British
 32. Lucy's ex
 34. Del
 37. Sandwich
 38. Transactions
 39. Arabian port

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★ ★ — THIS WEEK'S — ★ ★
HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: The moon's in Aries, causing sparks to fly. Matched with the Sun in Capricorn, there's bound to be lots of quick action required.

Aries (March 21-April 19). A stern boss will not find your pranks amusing. Stifle. These are good days to ask for a raise, although you may not see any money until later.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). A pesky past due assignment wrecks your plans. Reschedule the fun. You're looking good. Something you've been wanting for a long time could finally materialize.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). An older friend has a great idea. Put it into action. Pay bills and fees and you'll get into the program you want. A person from a different background's your most interesting choice.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Watch out for an older person with a hot temper. He or she could be on the warpath. Meet with friends and set up an agenda that will get you where you all want to go. It'll be easy to make important decisions.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). A stodgy older person cramps your style. There's no point in arguing, especially if your paycheck is involved. Go along with the program.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Love looks good but there's some tension regarding money. Once it gets there, you'll be able to do what you want. Make plans for the future. A new assignment disrupts your plans for the present. Not to worry.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Take it easy. Your date should go very well. A commitment would not be a mistake at all. Stash away as much money as possible. It'll come in very handy later.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your experience is rejected by a co-worker. Just wait — you'll have the last laugh. Go shopping for a household item. Education and love are linked for the next several months.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). A test in your career field dominates. Go out to celebrate whether you aced it or not. You will live through it, and that counts as a win. A friendly argument helps you keep your wits fine-tuned.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Don't take a friend's fit too seriously. He or she should be calmed down soon, with you back in control. Continue to make all the major decisions.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Don't let a rowdy friend talk you into more trouble than you have already. Keep him or her out of delicate negotiations.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Give your money to your partner and you'll come out ahead. He or she will get a better deal than you would. A disruption at your home messes up your schedule, but don't despair.



Sorry about the long wait for your order, sir, but the chef had to hide in the walk-in cooler while the immigration people searched the building.

MOOVIES

ABDOON
GALLERIA
THEATRES



TONIGHT

GALLERIA 1 هاتف خلوي ٠٧٩٣٣٤٣٠ GALLERIA 2

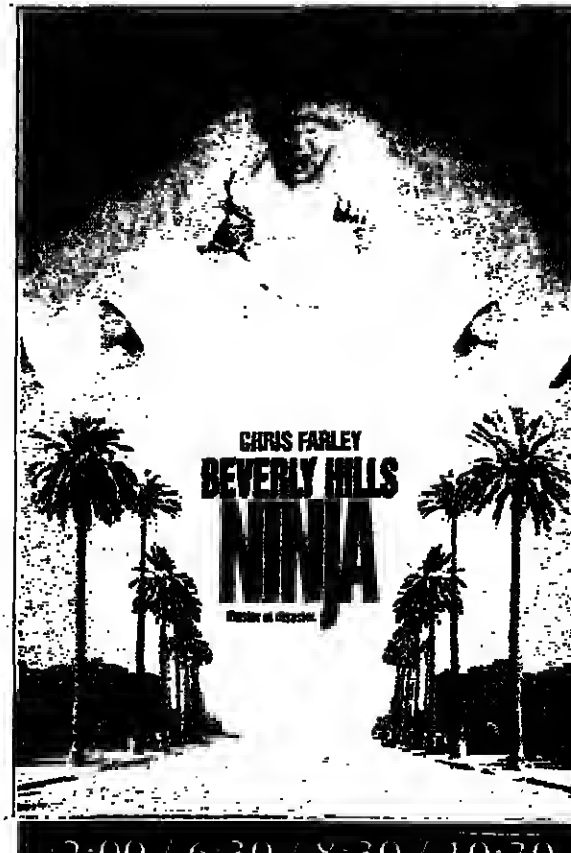
النجمة العالمية سلمى حايك .. في
FOOLS RUSH IN

BEVERLY HILLS
NINJA



Fools Rush In

2:00 / 6:30 / 8:30 / 10:30



CHRIS FARLEY
BEVERLY HILLS
NINJA

2:00 / 6:30 / 8:30 / 10:30

The Star
Online

<http://www.arabia.com/Star>

٠٧٩٣٣٤٣٠

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Gastronomie

Le monsieur Qatayef d'Amman

Le qatayef, à mi-chemin entre le muffin américain et la crêpe bretonne, est l'un des desserts les plus appréciés du Ramadan. L'infatigable pâtissier Abu Ali est l'un de ses chantres depuis près de 40 ans.



Dans son fournil, Abu Ali mène les opérations du pétrin jusqu'à la cuisson du qatayef.

C'est un réfugié palestinien qui habite en Jordanie depuis 1959. Il vient de Deir Yassin, ce village de Palestine, tristement célèbre pour le massacre de centaines de Palestiniens par l'armée israélienne. En 1948, sa famille quitte ses racines pour s'installer à Beirouth. «J'avais seulement 14 ans», raconte Abu Ali dans un dialecte libanais, comme c'était difficile d'aller à l'école, j'ai décidé de travailler dans des boulangeries et des pâtisseries pour gagner de l'argent et aider ma famille. Pendant douze ans au Liban, il apprend son métier. Puis il veut rejoindre son frère en Arabie Saoudite pour travailler ensemble et gagner plus d'argent. Il se retrouve alors à Amman. «Le pays était alors ébranlé par l'assassinat du premier ministre Muzian Al-Majali. C'était donc très compliqué de partir dans une telle situation surtout que les policiers arrêtaient beaucoup de Palestiniens pour les interroger. Pas d'autre choix pour Abu Ali que de se mettre à son compte pour survivre. «J'étais marié. Je devais faire n'importe quoi pour faire vivre ma famille. J'ai beaucoup réfléchi avant de me lancer et de monter ma propre pâtisserie profumée ainsi de mon expérience libanaise».

Abu Ali ne confectionne que le qatayef. Douze mois sur douze, il consacre ses fourneaux à ce dessert qui règne en

maître surtout pendant le mois de Ramadan. Il a été le premier en Jordanie à préférer cette originalité : «Le qatayef est une spécialité du mois de jeûne mais pour moi, ce n'est pas une raison pour qu'il disparaisse le reste de l'année. Il y a des gens qui l'aiment beaucoup et qui ne veulent pas en être privés pendant onze mois».

Aujourd'hui Abu Ali jouit d'une belle réputation. Il ne se contente pas de servir le tout Amman - ministres, députés, hommes de la rue, mais également des restaurants tels que Jubri ou Ata Ali. Ni le froid, ni la pluie, ni la grêle n'empêchent ses clients de faire la queue devant sa petite boutique au creux d'un escalier qui dévale

Djebel Lweibdeh vers la haseville. Abu Ali a un secret. Dans sa recette du qatayef trône des souvenirs du Liban. Ce goût particulier a fait sa renommée. «J'adore bien le qatayef d'Abu Ali et je ne manque jamais de passer par ici malgré le froid», confie un moustachu en s'essuyant le visage avec un mouchoir. Ce client fidèle fréquente le vieux pâtissier depuis 1971 : «La patience et l'habileté dont il fait preuve dans ce métier ne me poussent pas à aller voir ailleurs». Pour Abu Ali, cette confiance est la récompense qu'il a toujours espérée. «Dès que j'ai commencé ce métier, je me suis fixé trois objectifs : la qualité du produit, une clientèle satisfaite et le succès». Cette détermination recueille l'admiration de ses fils. «Peu de gens réalisent ce qu'ils désirent, intervient l'un de ses huit fils, nous sommes quatre à travailler avec lui et pourtant c'est toujours lui qui prépare la pâte». Depuis 39 ans, cet homme d'une soixantaine d'années, mains et bras couverts en permanence de farine, administre seul sa pâtisserie. Ce n'est pas une question de méfiance à l'égard de sa progéniture (qui hésite encore à lui succéder) mais d'indépendance : «Je ne veux pas rester à la maison et finir dans mon lit incapable de bouger. Il faut travailler pour se sentir vivant». Pendant qu'il parle, sourit aux lèvres, il remue la pâte à qatayef. Dehors, les clients attendent. ■

Nahed Al-Khloof

La recette du maître

Si les proportions restent inconnues (le vieux pâtissier se fie à son instinct), Abu Ali a accepté de nous livrer sa recette.

Mélangez de la farine avec de la semoule et de la levure dans un grand saladier. Agitez. Puis tout en remuant, ajoutez de l'eau bouillante pour que la pâte devienne visqueuse (et surtout pas liquide). À l'aide d'une carafe à col étroit, versez le liquide obtenu dans une poêle. Attention, allez-y doucement, il faut obtenir des ronds peu épais. Les morceaux cuisent d'un seul côté. Après deux minutes, les qatayef sont prêts. Il ne vous reste plus qu'à les déguster. Nature ou fourrés avec du fromage ou des noix concassées, les qatayef sont froids dans l'huile bouillante avant d'être plongés pendant deux à trois minutes dans une eau bouillante sucrée. Miam, miam ! ■

Société

Sous l'œil de la censure

Au nom d'une morale empreinte de religion, les Jordaniens ne sont pas libres de voir d'écouter ou de lire ce qu'ils veulent. Cinéma, télévision, radio, littérature, les ciseaux de l'interdit sont partout.



La censure : cette couverture du magazine français Le Nouvel Observateur a subi quelques modifications pour être visible dans les kiosques jordaniens. L'autocensure : en publiant l'original, le Star risquait une grosse amende (plus de 15.000 JD) voire la fermeture.

Jordannienne sans coupe apparente. Dans le cinéma, les films suivent un parcours légèrement différent. C'est une agence libanaise qui distribue les films au Moyen-Orient. Ils sont proposés aux clients sous deux versions : une complète et une autre déjà censurée. «Normalement nous achetons la seconde version», explique Husam Amouri, directeur général du cinéma Galleria à Abdoun. Puis le long-métrage est

déclaré à la douane et envoyé au département de la censure du Ministère de l'Information, qui s'occupe du deuxième degré de censure. «Licence to drive a par exemple est beaucoup coupé car il y avait des scènes de sexe trop osées pour les montrer ici», raconte M. Amouri. Il arrive même parfois que nous refusions un film à l'agence libanaise s'il y a trop de découpage à faire. C'était le cas de Scrubbel Hotel». En Jordanie, un bisou n'est pas systématiquement censuré. Ce n'est pas

une question de temps mais d'intensité. Les corps dénudés sont aussi sévèrement traités. La censure sévit également dans les magazines. Il n'est pas rare de voir la poitrine d'un topless gribouillé, rasé, transformé en short par le talent d'un peintre-censeur. Qui sont-ils ces horribles tronçonneurs, ces censeurs de l'ombre ? Ce ne sont pas des religieux qui portent barbe et Coran comme des flambeaux

mais des gens comme vous et moi, de simples fonctionnaires. Dans un bureau du département, chacun reçoit une pile d'ouvrages à dépouiller. A la première phrase suspecte, c'est tout le boudin qui est censuré. «Une fois, le livre d'une célèbre écrivaine égyptienne a été interdit à cause de la dernière ligne», se souvient l'un des responsables de la section. «C'est un travail qui est dur car il faut passer beaucoup de temps à voir des films ou à lire pour ne rien laisser passer et c'est aussi un travail pesant», ajoute-t-il. Surtout, quand, comme lui, on n'est pas convaincu du bien-fondé de la censure.

Marché noir

L'homme n'est pas dupe. Il sait qu'avec le développement d'internet et du satellite (de plus en plus abordable, à partir de 250 dinars), les jordaniens peuvent voir tout ce qu'ils veulent sans subir les hachoirs du pouvoir. «C'est vrai que l'on ne peut pas contrôler le satellite et internet. Cela veut dire que tout ce travail de censure n'a pas vraiment de logique», admet le directeur général du Galleria, il faudrait envisager autre chose : comme l'interdiction des films pour certaines tranches d'âge. C'est le cas en France, les films selon leur degré de violence ou d'érotisme sont interdits aux moins de 12 ou 16 ans.

La censure empêche le développement d'un marché noir. Le dernier James Bond n'est pas encore dans les salles, mais on peut déjà se le procurer, intact, dans certaines boutiques de vidéo. «Nous achetons très cher des films qui circulent sur le marché pour un dinar seulement», s'indigne Husam Amouri. Enfin, certaines salles de cinéma rivalisent d'imagination pour passer outre les interdictions. Pendant les vacances, telle séance sera ainsi agrémentée de clips pas très catholiques. Au spectateur de se débrouiller pour être là au bon moment et profiter de cet espace de liberté. ■

Amineh Ishtay

Climat

Le pessimisme au beau fixe

On dit que les Jordaniens tirent davantage la gueule que les autres habitants de la région. Devant ce cafard généralisé, pys et sociologues s'interrogent.

Renfrognés, moroses et bourrus. Trois adjectifs pour décrire une bonne part des citoyens jordaniens. Ils donnent pourtant l'impression d'une vie normale : ils travaillent (mais pas toujours), ils sortent, font leurs courses... Mais ils ne parviennent pas à cacher leur insatisfaction qui se lit sur leur visage.

Dans un bus sur l'autoroute entre Amman et Irbid, un malheureux d'une trentaine d'années s'assoit près de la fenêtre. La tête dans sa main gauche appuyée contre la vitre. Les sourcils froncés en permanence, il bouge à peine : une première fois pour ramasser son journal tombé depuis une demi-heure, la seconde fois, il sursaute et se retourne brusquement à ma question sur les soucis des Jordaniens. Il soupire longuement avant de se libérer d'une voix mélancolique : «Ça fait plus de dix ans que je bosse toute la journée sans pouvoir subvenir aux besoins de ma famille. A mon avis, c'est suffisant pour gâcher l'envie même de sourire». Sa phrase à peine terminée, il retourne à son mutisme initial. Avec 120 JD par mois dont 60 pour le loyer, ce jeune homme a de quoi être angoissé. Ses revenus ne sont certainement pas suffisants pour faire vivre sa femme et ses quatre enfants, ainsi que ses propres parents.

A l'Université de Mafraq, Mustafa est un étudiant en troisième année, particulièrement pessimiste quant à son avenir en Jordanie. «Ce sujet me tourmente beaucoup, dit-il sur le point de pleurer, la

conjoncture économique, la pauvreté élevée, le taux de chômage désastreux, les études supérieures très coûteuses... A cause de tout ça, la tristesse devient insupportable».

Sur un parking d'hôpital à Irbid, un vieux marchand ambulancier, tire la tronche. Rabougné, il s'appuie sur une béquille en bois dont il n'hésite pas à se servir pour arrêter les passants et se faire entendre : «Je vous en prie, achetez-moi un briquet» ou encore «Aidez un vieillard pour que Dieu vous accorde le succès». Aux personnes qui l'exaucent, il répond par un grand sourire et se met à raconter une histoire : «Mon seul fils a émigré en Allemagne. Enfin je crois. Les fils sont méchants n'est-ce pas ? Le mien ne m'envoie jamais d'argent. Moi, je gagne à peine de quoi survivre et il arrive parfois qu'après une journée exténuante, je n'aie récolté que des regards pleins de pitié».

Trop sérieux ?

Les souffrances sont différentes mais à chaque fois ce sont les mêmes réactions de lassitude et de résignation. Qu'en pensent les psychologues ? «Naturellement l'homme cherche toujours à satisfaire tous ses besoins : avoir à manger, avoir un travail, une famille etc... analyse le docteur Mohammad Al-Rimoudi, professeur de psychologie à l'Université de Jordanie. Le manque d'un de ces besoins vitaux crée chez lui un certain mécontentement qui mène parfois à des comportements hostiles». Depuis quelques années, la crise économique du roy-

aume trouble la vie des familles : bas salaires, perte de pouvoir d'achat, fluctuation des prix et bien entendu le chômage, dont les derniers chiffres spectaculaires ne sont pas faits pour rassurer. En général, la mauvaise conjoncture actuelle est le sujet principal d'inquiétude et de plainte et pour de nombreux Jordaniens, c'est l'obstacle principal au bien-être. Pour le psychologue, la situation économique n'est pas seule à mettre en cause : «Pauvre/malheureux n'est pas une alliance obligatoire. Je dirais qu'il y a des pauvres qui sont beaucoup plus heureux que des riches», explique Dr. Al-Rimoudi. Il y a d'autres éléments qui sont liés à la personnalité ou à la société, tels que les rapports tendus avec la famille ou les autres individus. Le docteur Sarry Nasser, professeur de sociologie à l'Université de Jordanie complète cette analyse : «C'est vrai que l'économie du pays est à l'origine de nombreux maux : chômage, pauvreté... Mais le peuple jordanien est aussi très sérieux, très sensible à tout ce qui se passe sur la scène politique, particulièrement dans la région. C'est pour cette raison aussi que les Jordaniens sont inquiets».

N. K.

Le Jourdain
Supplément
du Star
645 380

Nouvelles du Pays

Cinéma français

Semaine du comique

Neige en janvier, rires au ciné. Un dicton qui colle parfaitement à la programmation adoptée en ce début d'année par le Centre culturel français. Après le cycle Jacques Tati, le CCF poursuit sur la voie de la bonne humeur avec une semaine du cinéma comique. «Nous avons remarqué l'automne dernier pendant le festival européen que la comédie française est l'un des films qui a remporté le plus de succès», explique le directeur du centre, Denis Toupin. Fort de cet enseignement, les Français ont donc choisi d'enfoncer le clou avec cinq longs-métrages comiques réalisés entre 1990 et 1995. Depuis les facilités de Méliès jusqu'aux Visi-vix, en passant par les succès de Bourvil, Fernandel ou De Funès, la comédie franchouillarde est un genre qui n'a cessé de se renouveler tout au long de

l'histoire du cinéma hexagonal. La semaine qui vous est proposée rassemble les réalisateurs (Zidi, Serreau, Leconte...) et les acteurs (Clavier, Lhermitte, Timsit, Noiret...) les plus rompus à cet exercice de style exigeant. Comme le chante Marc Lavoine. «C'est ça la France» qui rit. ■

Le Jourdain

Tous les jours à partir d'aujourd'hui, découvrez l'humour français au cinéma Philadelphia (3e cercle). Séances à 20h30. Billets en vente au Philadelphia ou Centre culturel français (15 JD). Tous les films sont sous-titrés en arabe.

● **Tango**, de Patrice Leconte (1990) 90 minutes. Avec Philippe Noiret, Richard Bohringer et Thierry Lhermitte. Un mari infidèle mais ne supportant pas les incandescences de son épouse décide de la faire supprimer par un tueur. Jeudi 15 à 20h30.

● **La totale**, de Claude Zidi (1991) 95 minutes. Avec Thierry Lhermitte, Mimi Mami et Eddy Mitchell. Un agent secret de choc s'aperçoit que sa couverture de modestes employé des Télécoms va lui faire perdre sa femme qui trouve leur vie monotone. Vendredi 16 à 20h30.

● **La crise**, de Coline Serreau (1992) 95 minutes. Avec Vincent Lindon, Patrick Timsit et Zoltan. Un homme perd le travail pour son travail et sa femme. Seul un clochard va s'intéresser à son cas. Samedi 18 à 20h30.

● **La vengeance d'une blonde**, de Jean-Pierre Szwarc (1993) 95 minutes. Avec Christian Clavier, Marie-Anne Chazal, Thierry Lhermitte. Un journaliste de province, devenu présentateur du journal de 20 heures d'une chaîne de télévision parisienne privée, voit sa vie transformée du jour au lendemain. Dimanche 19 à 20h30.

● **Fantôme avec chauffeur**, de Gérard Oury (1995) 90 minutes. Avec Philippe Noiret et Gérard Jugnot. Deux hommes, un grand patron et son chauffeur se connaissent bien mal de leur vivant. Ils vont devoir apprendre à vivre ensemble dans l'au-delà. Lundi 19 à 20h30.



سنة ١٩٩٨

By Nigel Andrews

ATTENTION. PLEASE. The ship, now sinking on wet-stage number 1, Rosaria Studios, Mexico, is the 1912 luxury liner from Southampton. Evacuate now, women and children first. If you wish to move to a watching position, please book seats at cinema worldwide and encourage your friends and family to do likewise.

It is 85 years since the world's most famous unsinkable ship sank. Now, the world's most expensive film, a \$250 million epic which would have taken much of Hollywood with it if it had gone down has sailed triumphantly into US cinemas and is about to dock in Britain.

Those who do not know the statistics of Titanic soon will, such is the reach and power of movie publicity. At 775ft to the original's 882ft, the film's size is almost 90 percent lifelike. It has been resting in the world's largest tank: six acres in area, 17m gallons in volume. And to people its story, more "extras" were created by computer graphics up to 1,000 than for any previous film, not to mention more birds, fish, ice floes and smoke effects.

The film's \$250 million budget beats the \$170 million Waterworld, an epic that was nearly bankrupted by HBO, not to mention the costliest film before that, the \$120 million Terminator 2, by Titanic's own writer-director James Cameron. Of course, these aren't just facts; fascinating as they are, they are part of a vital part of the movie's hype. Obligingly re-echoed by news-hungry reporters (including this one), the goblets and statistics make a contribution to the promotional brouhaha.

Ever since Creation, which boasted the finest copywriting of all (opening verses of the "Book of Genesis"), descendant creators have resorted to every selling technique known to man or woman. Our own century has seen hype's busiest hour. Cinema, especially of Titanic proportions, needs so many ticket-buyers for it to break even that art must go hand in hand with marketing.

The Bible's opening is an apt analogy for the promotion process. In the beginning was the word. Then came the visuals: posters, graphics, screen advertising. Finally, just like Adam and Eve, the human participants enter the frame with the pre-launch interview phase.

Even before the public is wooed, however, the film must be "sold" to the first client of all: the studio. Hype begins when the person with the idea scriptwriter or director brings the sales pitch to the man with the money. Cameron had few problems with 20th Century Fox. As the director of hit films such as Alien and Terminator 2, he no sooner uttered the word "Titanic" than he received \$3 million to dive down and film the actual ship (for footage used in the movie's training sequences), followed by a starter budget of \$130 million for the production itself. Meanwhile he spent \$40 million building his own studio complex in Mexico.

The true-life story of this iceberg-destroyed liner is one thing; it has a proven track record on screen. But what of other

tales? What about a weird tale, equally epic in scope, about a burned wartime pilot flashbacking to a doomed love affair with a married Englishwoman while being aursed in Italy by a Frenchwoman? Original author: some Booker Prize winner from Canada.

"It took me days to work out how to pitch The English Patient," says its producer Saul Zaentz. "The studios want to hear, 'It's about this white cop and this black cop'. I finally figured out to say, 'What would you do if someone came to you today with Dr Zhivago or Lawrence of Arabia, neither of which had a star in the main role and which had a notoriously difficult director?'"

Zaentz got the nod. But he shrewdly passed on the next, optional, expensive stage of hype, which is market research. This may not look like promotion, but it is. It is the first phase in creating public awareness of a movie, and in massaging public "perception" of it.

Zaentz's hunch, was that a complex theme-and-variations film such as The English Patient could be sold to the public only by being seen. By contrast, a more commercial-sounding project such as the new Mad City, an urban siege thriller starring Dustin Hoffman and John Travolta, can benefit from "tracking" early responses to the idea and to the star package.

"Tracking is gauging audience interest before the film opens," says Mad City's producer Arnold Kopelson, a firm believer in its efficacy. "Testers get people coming out of the theatre and say, 'We're making this film with Dustin Hoffman and John Travolta, and it's about the media'. They'll agree and score for interest and response."

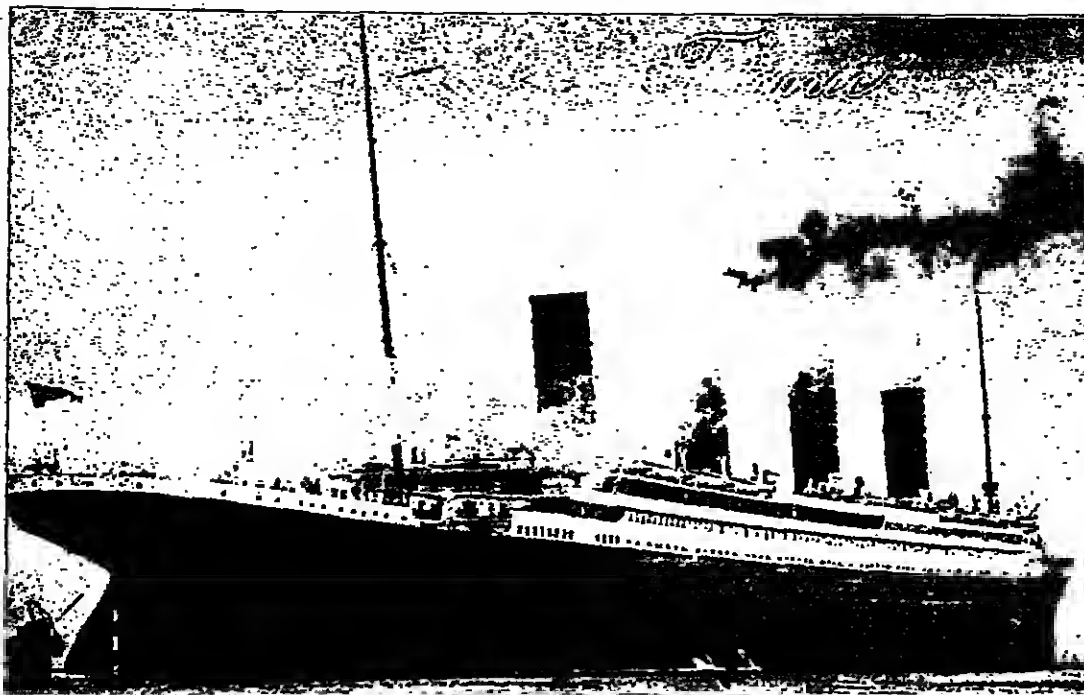
The National Research Group, which holds the monopoly in this fieldwork, defends not just the work's usefulness against the occasional Hollywood cry of "pseudoscience!" "This is a hard-nosed business and if our clients weren't getting results they wouldn't keep employing us," says the principle of it. "It's always been felt that having films responsive to their audience when they're entertainment

products, is not an unreasonable thing."

Information on demographics, with responses divided by class, sex or area, helps the hype experts to focus their campaign. But market research can get it wrong. The most famous example was Steven Spielberg's E.T. Former studio chief Ned Tanen remembers: "Research came back to Columbia that put the film in turnaround that is, off the production floor and back into the bidding market 'because they said, 'No one over four years old will go see this.' E.T. went on to become the highest-grossing film in history."

The conclusion is that the key agent in hype may not be the hypnist but the ever-unpredictable "hype." "Before we released Death Wish," says director Michael Winner, "Dino Di Laurentis [the producer] wanted me to change the title to The Sidewalk Vigilante. Because no film with death in the title had ever succeeded. He would ring me up at midnight and say, 'Ehhh, Michael, I cannot sleep, please change the title'. I refused. And after Death Wish was a hit, there were a string of films called Death Hunt, Death Weekend, death this, death that."

How to make a movie blockbuster



suited men in high-fashion shades.

At the same time as a big movie's prelude consumer blitz, or just before, come the sneak previews. This is the last chance for fine-tuning. Random test audiences, filling out cards to indicate everything from adoration in contempt, inspire last-minute adjustments. The most famous example is the ending of Fatal Attraction. People wanted a more punitive fate for Glenn Close, the villainess, and she got it.

With Mad City, sneak previews became a guide, or warning, that the film was not hitting the button. Dismayed by negative reaction, Kopelson and director Costa-Gavras reshoot and retested crucial scenes as the opening date drew near, hoping public input would ensure eventual public favour.

With The English Patient, Saul Zaentz decided to eschew sneak previews, just as he had passed over market research. He tested the movie "in house" with the production staff: "Even at 40 hours, which was the first cut, it was obvious just from people's body language, that we had a hit. It changed our whole mood."

One reason for skipping sneak previews, and market-testing, is money. With millions of pounds involved, most British films cannot afford it. The National Research Group says: "The market is so much larger in the US, where your money is spent for a potential audience of 200m not 50m."

So in Britain how do you test the water, pre-release, on a film such as, say, The Full Monty? Before becoming a surprise hit on both sides of the Atlantic, this male-stripper comedy was a mini-budget film being made in Yorkshire.

"Comedy is very hard to sell unless you have star names," says the film's publicist Sara Keane. "With a big costume drama like The Last Emperor you can invite the press to the shoot and they'll see the fabulous sets and costumes. But if I rang you and said, 'I'm working on a film in Sheffield with no actors you've heard of and a first-time

director, and I can't send you the script,' would you write a piece? And the actors didn't want the press on the one day that would have made news, the day they stripped off."

So The Full Monty had to wait for that perilous climactic moment, one that has become almost mythic in the movie business today: The Opening Weekend. In the US, even more than in Britain, this is make-or-break time. Industry antennae are so fine-tuned that, according to Peter Bart, editor of Variety, it isn't even the first 16 hours that count. It is the first 12.

"With films opening today in 2,000 or 3,000 theatres, by 10 o'clock on Saturday morning, after just two performances, studios have not only calculated what they will make or lose, they are adjusting ad schedules and foreign opening dates accordingly."

Sometimes the news is not good. The troubled Mad City, which at first seemed so surefire a star-and-story combination, opened last November to a catastrophic box office. To date, the Warner release has barely recouped \$10m, or half Travolta's acting fee. Titanic, however, took \$36m between last Friday and Sunday, a new record for a December weekend that brought its total for the first 10 days of US release in \$90m.

Could Mad City have been saved, or helped, by a good PR campaign? Possibly. How important a role promotion was deemed to have played or failed to play may be gauged by the fact that Warner Studios fired its head of publicity soon after the film's opening. He had also been linked to another of the studio's shock flops in 1997, the Robin Williams comedy Father's Day.

Sometimes even a troubled film can be helped by what may be its last high-visibility weapons: the poster and its slogan. Gordon Weaver thought up the ad-line for the first Star Trek film. The line buzzed about for months in every Trekkie and non-Trekkie's head. "I was having lunch with Gene Roddenberry, the series creator. And he said, 'I've just been down to NASA and, you know, the human adventure is just beginning.' I thought, what a marvellous copline. 'The human adventure'."

Variety's Peter Bart gives full marks in Titanic's publicity campaign, including its slogan. Below the lovers' faces looming over the ship's prow are the words: "Nothing on earth could come between them." (On earth, not: not on sea.) Clever stuff, probably requiring a fraction of the overall publicity budget. Today, that hit to promote and launch a movie can reach \$20 million in \$30 million, adding up to 50 percent to the production cost of an average \$60 million film.

It is megahuck hoop-la for an increasingly megabuck industry. After that, however when the final PR champagne bottles have been cracked against a movie's side only the public can decide, only you and I, if the vessel will float or sink. ■

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THE STAR'S STATISTICAL WORK COMPUTING & HIGH TECH NOT

Edited by Zeid Nasser

The microprocessor you have been waiting for: MediaGX from Cyrix

By a Star staff writer

CYRIX ARE blasting onto the microprocessor scene with their MediaGX processor, which represents an excellent, low-cost entry level chip for desktop computers.

Already, the ripples of the MediaGX are resulting in amazingly low PC systems from companies like Hewlett-Packard, Compaq and IBM; who, traditionally, produce high cost PCs.

However, thanks to the MediaGX, these companies and tens of others are introducing entry-level PCs at under the \$800 mark in the United States.

This is sparking a massive price war between Cyrix and Intel, also including AMD—the third main microprocessor provider.

Although MediaGX processors are not as powerful as higher-end Intel processors, they are delivering an excellent choice to less demanding users who are more price conscious.

So, what is this MediaGX processor all about and what makes it so special?

Well, the MediaGX follows Cyrix's policy of delivering a PC-on-a-chip, by which more integration of a PC's parts is being adopted to cut down on production costs, while still complying with full Pentium compatibility.

It is the sheer integration offered by the MediaGX which

makes it so unique and proves that more features can be packed into a single chip structure. There are a lot of shared memory technologies and adaptations utilized to provide graphical features. All in all, the MediaGX is an

MediaGX, he warned, as critics point out that currently available MediaGX processors are still lacking in the areas of handling complex or 3 dimensional graphics, especially as the Cyrix processors don't provide MMX instructions which are necessary to advance graphical abilities.

However, Cyrix intends to continuously improve its MediaGX processor, in order to keep up with Intel's moves to develop its MMX chips.

Accordingly, when Cyrix first introduced the MediaGX it was a 120MHz processor, then 133 MHz processor. Now it is capable of speeds up to 166MHz or even

180MHz which are quite satisfactory.

In the works, is a 200MHz processor, with MMX instructions.

All these developments, and the continued rivalry between Cyrix, AMD and Intel are going to result in further jumbling of PC prices on the international market.

These effects will trickle in the Middle East, which is still somewhat slow to adopt PC with processors other than Intel inside.

However, with Cyrix and AMD processors proving their worth, it's just a matter of time before you will have an option to purchase a PC with a MediaGX at its heart. ■



engineering innovation that should spell major cost cuts in the microprocessor industry.

This resembles somewhat of a departure from the standard Cyrix chip design set by its 5x86 processor. The company is still utilizing that chip design, and is working on the 6x86, which complies to Intel designs. Although not being so competitively priced at first, the 6x86 is to be offered at price lower than the corresponding Intel Pentium processor and will, accordingly, gain ground.

Performance tests show that the 6x86 MMX is gaining in on the Intel Pentium 200MMX in terms of performance, but still lags behind the AMD K6 200.

Getting back to the

Following the merge of AST Research into Samsung: PC power from US joins Japanese might

AFTER THE completion of the merger of AST Research, the top American PC manufacturer, with Samsung Electronics, it is said that Samsung now has annual sales in excess of \$7 Billion dollars, which put it ahead of IBM, the company claims.

The two companies will each benefit from the other's strengths and intend to soon introduce a PC-TOP-TV which will blend together the functionality of a PC with a television.

According to AST officials, they expect the merger with Samsung to enhance their logistics abilities worldwide, reducing the time between production and the availability of product on the market. AST will benefit from Samsung's strategies of managing

inventory and delivery such as Configure To Order (COT) and Final Configuration Test Packaging (FCTP).

On the other hand, Samsung will benefit from AST outlets



across the world, to sell its consumer electronics and should utilize AST's know-how in computing and digital technologies to add more of a 'digital nature' to its home and office appliances and equipment. AST plans to increase its

research and development budget and is already showing its higher commitment to the Middle East by training some 200 members of AST staff and distributors from all over the region.

On another note, AST has recently introduced a whole new line of PCs, in addition to its already popular Bravo line. One particular model in the Bravo line stands out as it delivers no-noise computing.

The silent operation of AST's specially designed PC is said to provide a healthier working environment, that cut down on noise pollution.

For more information on AST products in Jordan, contact Specialized Technical Services (STS) on telephone 827611 or Jordan Computer Trading Co. (JCTC) at telephone 643896. ■

News update

CA produces quick-fix for Year 2000 problem

Computer Associates (CA), the global software developer, claims that its new product called New Year 2000 Fix is supposed to provide a quick fix for the millennium bug problem.

Specializing in tackling the problem in COBOL programs, CA's software should enable users to correct entire applications in a relatively short time.

This software is only part of a whole package that Computer Associates is introducing for the Year 2001 bug, which will be

called the 'Discovery 2000 package'.

For more information on CA products in Jordan, contact Computer Applications & Technical Services (CATS) on telephone 824111.

Yahoo! Most visited site in the world

The top location for Web surfing turned out to be Yahoo! which recorded a phenomenal 16.7 million Internet users during November 1997. To check out Yahoo! go to www.yahoo.com.

Coming in second and third were the sites operated by

Netscape Communications (13.5 million visitors) and Microsoft (10.5 million visitors) respectively.

From previous months throughout 1997, Yahoo! has proved to be a leader, always followed by Netscape and Microsoft.

Other top sites include Excite, America On Line, InfoSeek, GeoCities, Microsoft Network (MSN), Lycos and Alta Vista.

Summing up these top ten sites, there are an average of 86 million visits a month! Now, that's a massive figure.

A new massive SyQuest Drive

FOR THOSE in need of larger, removable storage media, SyQuest has introduced a new SyQuest drive capable of handling 4.7Gb cartridges.

The SyQuest 4.7Gb drive is priced at around \$600 while each 4.7 Gb cartridge is priced at around \$200.

The drive utilizes Ultra SCSI-3 technology capable of transferring data at speeds of 10.6 Megabits per second. The speed of transfer is assisted by a Cache memory of around 2 Megabyte.

It is important to note that the choice of 4.7Gb to be the storage capacity is in compliance with the Digital Video standard (DVD) used in multimedia. ■



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RAMADAN KAREEM

The mouth-watering Katayef is rooted deep in Islamic history

By Ilham Sadeq

Star Staff Writer

IT WAS very cold outside and only 15 minutes before the Maghrib Athan breaking of the fast and evening prayer, but people were still waiting in front of bakeries to buy their favorite katayef. Many employees just rush after finishing their work to buy their katayef while others ask their wives or even children to buy it to avoid the long queues.

"I used to come to this bakery directly after work," says Abu Osama who was also car-

rying bags of fruits and vegetables.

For Muslims, katayef is a permanent guest in Ramadan and it is seldom to see their table devoid of such a sweet delicacy. Realizing the love-affair between people and the katayef, some bakeries continue to prepare it throughout the year.

"We don't stop preparing katayef, however demand increases in the holy month," says Mohammad Abdul Aziz of the Raghadan Bakeries Co., in downtown Amman.

The company, in Ramadan

operates three branches situated in the same area to meet the high demand. "Before Ramadan we used to sell daily about 80 to a 100 kilos, now we are selling about 700-800 kilos every day," he adds with a smile.

Operating with a staff of about 108 workers, the bakery look like a beehive. One quickly hands katayef to the customers, a second receives the payment, a third is baking on a large hot iron plate, while a fourth methodically pours the mixture.

"Demand for katayef

increases normally after 2 o'clock," Mr Abdul Aziz says pointing out at the man infusing the dough which contains flour, milk and semolina.

The Raghadan Bakeries Co. had been in existence since 1948 and the three branches in the downtown area started in 1965. There is also branches in Jabal Al Hussein and Sweifiah.

But do katayef lovers know the meaning of the word or from where it was introduced? "Katayef is derived from the Arab verb kataba which means to pick or reap the har-

vest," says Dr Mohammad Al Druubi, a professor in the Department of Arabic in Al Al Bayt University. The singular of Katayef is Katabah which means velvet.

"So katayef was given such a name because it looks like velvet when you touch it," explains Dr Al Druubi.

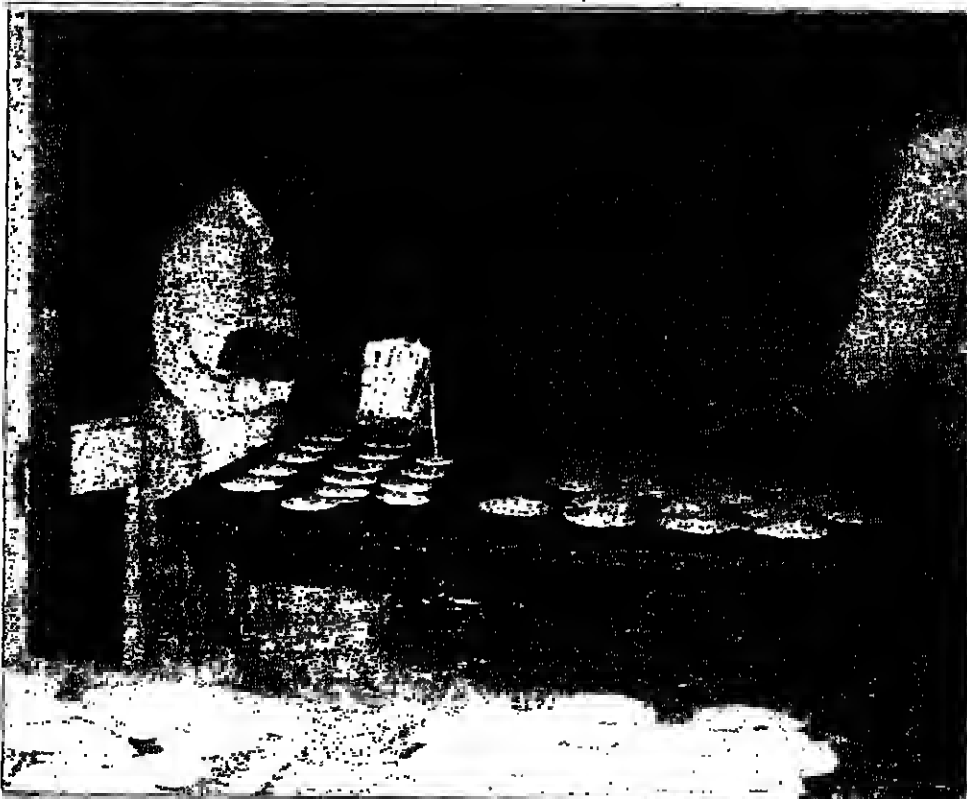
The professor says the word goes back to the Umayyad period. Some even attribute it to the caliph Muaweyah Bin Abi Sufyan who had been ill because of hunger during Ramadan.

"When he consulted his physician Mohammad Bin Athal, he told him to eat katayef during Sohour (the second meal eaten before dawn)," the professor adds.

However, others say it refers to Suleiman Bin Abdul Malik, "but what is sure is that it was first introduced during the Umayyad rule."

Also many Arab poets have written verses of poetry speaking about the mouth-watering katayef. One poet is even named "Abu Katabah".

Selling katayef during Ramadan is a profitable business. Virtually every supermarket and shop also engage in the trade. In Zarqa and Russeifah,



owners of groceries and restaurants started selling katayef hoping to benefit from the "seasonal profit."

However, the owner of the Abu Nima restaurant tells The Star in an angry mood "as you can see, demand is very weak, though I'm selling it 50 fils less than the other vendor opposite me." A kilo of katayef is sold between 450 and 600 fils.

The agitated man continues to say that he is only selling about 30-35 kilos per day, murmuring "The situation is critical and we are losing as we can't meet even the lowest cost of preparing katayef."

The poor man also displays a ready-made filling stuff for katayef, but it seems that despite this he failed to attract more than four or five cus-

tomers. The consumers of these bakeries are mostly housewives, especially in the first quarter of the day, to save waiting in a long queue.

"My children prefer asaffiri katayef, which is more expensive than the medium or the big-sized katayef," Um Firas says pointing out to the small pieces of Katayef arranged in an attractive manner.

But other bakeries seem to prepare katayef to give that yellowish special color. "We add to the mixture rose water plus lemon essence and vanilla," says Khaled Al Sous, who is an owner of a fast food restaurant but sells katayef in Ramadan.

Our sales reach as high as 300 kilos a day but "demand for katayef weakens in the last week of Ramadan, when

we sell only 200 kilos."

Housewives in turn, use their creative abilities in filling the stuff and serve it to their guests. "I like katayef with cheese, while my husband and kids prefer it with nuts," says Um Rodos, a midwife in Al Bashir Hospital. "But do you believe that since the beginning of Ramadan, I have only bought two kilos of katayef, and there is still some left unfilled in the fridge."

Some housewives fill the katayef with nuts, others with cheese plus raisins or jam and coconut. Um Rodos who is married to an Egyptian says "In Egypt they just fill it with raisins and cream, then it is fried in melted butter, and finally served after adding honey or syrup."

In some countries, if cinnamon and cardamom is added to the mixture, katayef has an attractive taste and special flavor.

Generally speaking in Ramadan, people forget about tightening the belts or keeping their bodies fit and eat too much sweets. But doctors say such sweets are necessary to provide the body with needed calories especially in cold weather. ■

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